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Everything in Common?

The Theology and Practice of the Sharing of Possessions in
Community in the New Testament with Particular
Reference to Jesus and his Disciples, the Earliest Christians,
and Paul.

A Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Fiona Jane Robertson Gregson

Middlesex University
Supervised at London School of Theology
September 2014

Abstract

Everything in Common?

**The Theology and Practice of the Sharing of Possessions in
Community in the New Testament with Particular Reference to Jesus
and his Disciples, the Earliest Christians, and Paul.**

Fiona Jane Robertson Gregson

PhD, Middlesex University, 2014

This thesis examines the theology and practice of the sharing of possessions, including food, in community in the New Testament. A significant proportion of the New Testament addresses questions around money, possessions and sharing, and provides a range of examples of ways of sharing possessions. This thesis looks at six diverse examples of sharing possessions in the New Testament, from the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline literature. It considers each example in its social context and then compares it to other examples of sharing in the surrounding cultures to find similarities and differences between the example and surrounding practice and thought. It then examines the comparisons to see whether there are ways in which Christians developed sharing possessions that were consistently similar to or different from surrounding practice.

The thesis highlights a number of common characteristics across the New Testament examples of how Christians shared possessions. In the New Testament examples, sharing: is practical and responsive; is based on communal identity; includes people from different backgrounds and various ways of contributing; is voluntary and yet includes assumptions; is both individual and communal; often responds to need; and includes eating together.

This thesis analyses similarities and differences between each example and its comparators. It also identifies ways that Christians were consistently distinctive from the surrounding culture in how they shared possessions, as well as areas where Christians were similar to, and may have been influenced by the surrounding practices. The consistent distinctives include: subverting patronage expectations; greater social diversity; more flexibility; a greater emphasis on the voluntary nature of contributing; each person being involved in giving; more frequent eating together; and stronger intra-community relational bonds.

This thesis demonstrates a possible approach for examining areas where there is a diverse witness within the New Testament texts.

Acknowledgements

As I come to the end of this research project, I express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to those in various ways have shared with me and made it possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Steve Walton, who, from the start of our initial conversations about the possibility of this study, has provided encouragement, advice and enthusiasm, and has shared his wisdom and practical advice.

I am grateful to the Women's Continuing Educational Trust, the Diocese of Birmingham and the Diocese of Bradford, who have all provided support towards the cost of undertaking this research.

I would also like to give thanks for the support and prayers of the parishes (Aston and Nechells, Birmingham; St Philip Girlington, Bradford) that I have worked in, who have given me time to pursue this study alongside my parish commitments. My clergy colleagues in both places have provided cover. Colleagues, parishioners and individuals within the Dioceses of Birmingham and Bradford have encouraged me and showed interest in the research.

I am grateful for the resources I have found, and fellowship I have experienced at the various libraries across the UK who have provided resources and assistance at different stages of the project: Tyndale House Library, Cambridge; Leeds University Library; Birmingham University Library; Queens College, Birmingham; University Library, Cambridge; and the Bodleian Library, Oxford. I am also thankful for researchers from around the world who have been willing to share their studies and wisdom with me.

Adrian and Jill Chatfield have on numerous occasions shared their home with me, welcoming me with hospitality, which has enabled me to spend time at Tyndale House, Cambridge and to spend time out of the parish for a few days at a time to concentrate on the research. I am grateful for their encouragement and support. Particular thanks go to David Fletcher, Mike Gregson, Gill McIlwaine and Joyce Robertson for proofreading various chapters of the thesis, and to Chris Robertson for providing IT advice. My family, friends and husband have provided ongoing encouragement, support and prayers. For all of these people and many more I give thanks to God and I pray that this research may be for his glory, and the edification of his body, the church.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow the *SBL Handbook of Style* with the addition of the following abbreviations:

Aristides <i>Or.</i>	Publius Aelius Aristides, <i>Orations</i>
<i>Comm.</i>	Ambrosiaster, <i>Commentary on Paul's Epistles</i>
<i>Comm. 2 Cor.</i>	Theodoret of Cyrrihus, <i>Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians</i>
<i>Diod. Sic.</i>	Diodorus of Sicily
<i>DNTB</i>	<i>Dictionary of New Testament Background</i> , Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), Leicester: IVP, 2000.
<i>Ep.</i>	Martial, <i>Epigrams</i> .
<i>His.</i>	Polybius, <i>The Histories</i> .
<i>Hom. 10</i>	Chrysostom, <i>A Sermon on Almsgiving</i>
<i>IGRP</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas Pertinentes</i>
<i>LEP</i>	Diogenes Laertius, <i>Lives of Eminent Philosophers</i>
<i>Or. Hist.</i>	Orosius, Paulus, <i>Seven Books of History against the Pagans: the Apology of Paulus Orosius</i> .
<i>P. Lond.</i>	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i> . VII, <i>The Zenon Archive</i> , ed. T.C. Skeat. 1974. Nos. 1930—2193. http://www.philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/?p=2922 accessed 28/08/14.
<i>P. Oxy.</i>	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> , London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898–.
ps Diogenes <i>Ep.</i>	‘The Epistles of Diogenes’ from A. Malherbe, <i>The Cynic Epistles: a Study Edition</i> . Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977.
ps Soc <i>Ep.</i>	‘The Epistles of Socrates and the Socratics’ from A. Malherbe, <i>The Cynic epistles: a Study Edition</i> . Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977
TRENT	Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament
<i>VP</i>	Iamblichus <i>On the Pythagorean Life</i>

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Literature Review	2
1.1.1. <i>Contemporary Questions</i>	<i>2</i>
1.1.2. <i>Ethical Studies</i>	<i>3</i>
1.1.3. <i>NT Approaches to Possessions in Wider Studies</i>	<i>4</i>
1.1.4. <i>New Testament Studies.....</i>	<i>6</i>
1.1.5. <i>Sharing Possessions in the New Testament.....</i>	<i>11</i>
1.2. Approach of this Thesis.....	13
1.2.1. <i>New Testament Examples.....</i>	<i>15</i>
1.2.2. <i>Key Questions</i>	<i>16</i>
1.2.3. <i>Comparing the Examples</i>	<i>17</i>
1.2.4. <i>Results.....</i>	<i>17</i>
2. The γλωσσόκομον in John.....	19
2.1. The Practice and Theology of Jesus and his Disciples	19
2.1.1. <i>Common Purse Passages.....</i>	<i>19</i>
2.1.1.1. <i>John 12.4–8.....</i>	<i>20</i>
2.1.1.2. <i>John 13.28–29.....</i>	<i>20</i>
2.1.1.3. <i>Other John Passages.....</i>	<i>22</i>
2.1.1.4. <i>Summary of the Common Purse in John</i>	<i>22</i>
2.1.1.5. <i>The Proximity of the Common Purse to Judas.....</i>	<i>24</i>
2.1.1.6. <i>Conclusions.....</i>	<i>26</i>
2.1.2. <i>Other Indications of the Practice of Jesus and his Disciples</i>	<i>26</i>
2.1.2.1. <i>The Call of the Disciples</i>	<i>27</i>
2.1.2.2. <i>Non-itinerant Associates</i>	<i>28</i>
2.1.2.3. <i>Luke 8 and the Women.....</i>	<i>29</i>
2.1.2.4. <i>The Sending Out of the Twelve and the Seventy-two.....</i>	<i>29</i>
2.1.2.5. <i>The Disciple Jesus Loved and Mary, and the Disciples after the Crucifixion</i>	<i>30</i>
2.1.2.6. <i>Summary of the Other Indications of the Practice of Jesus and his Disciples.....</i>	<i>31</i>
2.1.3. <i>Summary of the Practice of Jesus and his Disciples.....</i>	<i>32</i>
2.2. Possible Parallels.....	33
2.2.1. <i>Rabbis and their Disciples.....</i>	<i>33</i>
2.2.1.1. <i>Evidence about Rabbis and their Disciples.....</i>	<i>33</i>
2.2.1.1.1. <i>Issues Surrounding the Evidence</i>	<i>33</i>
2.2.1.1.2. <i>Schools and Payment.....</i>	<i>34</i>
2.2.1.1.3. <i>How to find Disciples / become a Disciple.....</i>	<i>34</i>
2.2.1.1.4. <i>The Relationship between Rabbi and Disciples.....</i>	<i>35</i>
2.2.1.1.5. <i>The Example of Bannus and Josephus.....</i>	<i>35</i>
2.2.1.2. <i>Jesus, his Disciples and the Pharisees / Rabbis – Similarities</i>	<i>36</i>
2.2.1.3. <i>Jesus, his Disciples and the Pharisees / Rabbis – Differences</i>	<i>37</i>

2.2.2. <i>Essenes and Qumran</i>	38
2.2.2.1. <i>Evidence</i>	38
2.2.2.1.1. <i>The Relationship between Khirbet Qumran and the Scrolls</i>	38
2.2.2.1.2. <i>Evidence of Sharing Possessions</i>	39
2.2.2.1.3. <i>The Relationship between the Qumran Community and the Essenes</i> 42	
2.2.2.2. <i>Links and Relationship to Jesus and his Disciples</i>	43
2.2.2.3. <i>Similarities</i>	45
2.2.2.4. <i>Differences</i>	45
2.2.2.5. <i>Conclusions</i>	46
2.2.3. <i>Cynics</i>	47
2.2.3.1. <i>Evidence</i>	47
2.2.3.2. <i>Links / Relationship to Jesus and his Disciples</i>	48
2.2.3.3. <i>Similarities</i>	49
2.2.3.4. <i>Differences</i>	50
2.2.3.5. <i>Conclusions</i>	51
2.3. Conclusion	51
3. Sharing Possessions in Acts	53
3.1. Background Questions	53
3.1.1. <i>Introduction</i>	53
3.1.2. <i>Historical Questions</i>	54
3.1.3. <i>Purpose and Readership</i>	56
3.2. The Early Community in Jerusalem.	57
3.2.1. <i>The Texts</i>	57
3.2.1.1. <i>Acts 2.42-47</i>	57
3.2.1.2. <i>Acts 4.32-35</i>	61
3.2.1.3. <i>Acts 4.36-5.11</i>	66
3.2.1.4. <i>Acts 6.1-6</i>	71
3.2.1.5. <i>Other Key Acts passages</i>	76
3.2.2. <i>The Example of the Early Church</i>	77
3.2.3. <i>Parallels in the Surrounding Culture</i>	82
3.2.3.1. <i>Jewish Almsgiving Practice</i>	82
3.2.3.2. <i>Qumran and the Essenes</i>	84
3.2.3.3. <i>Pythagoras and the Community at Croton</i>	86
3.2.4. <i>Conclusion</i>	88
3.3. The Community in Antioch: Committed Relationship, Corporate Responsibility and Careful Stewardship	89
3.3.1. <i>The Texts</i>	89
3.3.1.1. <i>Acts 11.27-30</i>	89
3.3.1.2. <i>Historical Questions - Acts 11, Acts 15, Galatians 2, and the Pauline Collection</i>	98
3.3.1.3. <i>Acts 12.25</i>	101
3.3.2. <i>The Example of the Collection for Judaea</i>	102
3.3.3. <i>Responses to Famine and Food Shortage in the Graeco-Roman World..</i>	104

3.3.4. Conclusion	107
4. First Corinthians 11 – Sharing Food	108
4.1. Introduction	108
4.2. Graeco-Roman Background	109
4.2.1. Meals in the Graeco-Roman World	109
4.2.1.1. Different Meal Contexts	110
4.2.1.2. Jewish Meals	111
4.2.1.3. Meals: Form and Structure	112
4.2.1.4. Status and Stratification at Meals	114
4.2.2. Patronage	117
4.3. Corinth and the Corinthian church	119
4.4. First Corinthians 11.17-34	126
4.4.1. What is Happening in the Corinthian Church?	126
4.4.2. How Does Famine Fit with This, Who Are the Have Nots?	132
4.4.3. Other Background Issues	132
4.4.3.1. Idol Meat	132
4.4.3.2. Why now?	133
4.4.4. Paul's Response	133
4.4.4.1. Criticism	134
4.4.4.2. Catechesis	136
4.4.4.3. The Way Forward	138
4.5. Other Texts	143
4.6. The Example of Sharing in 1 Corinthians 11	146
4.7. Specific Examples of Meals in the Graeco-Roman World ...	147
4.8. Comparison	149
4.9. Conclusion	151
5. Second Corinthians – Sharing at a Distance	153
5.1. Introduction	153
5.2. The Corinthian Context	154
5.2.1. Paul's Relationship with the Corinthians	154
5.2.2. Form(ation) of 2 Corinthians	155
5.3. Second Corinthians 8 and 9: Paul's Exhortation about the Collection	157
5.3.1. The Example of the Macedonians	158
5.3.2. Paul's Instructions to the Corinthians	160
5.3.3. Titus and the Brothers	165
5.3.4. Why Give?	168
5.3.5. Grace, Service, Fellowship and Blessing: Paul's Use of Theologically Significant Words	174
5.3.6. Questions about Paul's Argument	177
5.4. Other Texts	179
5.4.1. 1 Corinthians 16.1-4	179
5.4.2. Acts	181
5.4.3. Galatians 2.10	183

5.4.4. <i>Romans 15.25–32</i>	185
5.5. Questions about the collection	187
5.5.1. <i>For the Poor in Jerusalem or for All Believers in Jerusalem?</i>	187
5.5.2. <i>Why Jerusalem?</i>	187
5.5.3. <i>Paul's Aim in the Collection</i>	188
5.6. The Example of Sharing in 2 Cor 8 and 9	190
5.7. Comparisons	192
5.7.1. <i>Helena and Izates</i>	192
5.7.2. <i>Curator Annonae</i>	193
5.7.3. <i>Temple Tax</i>	194
5.7.4. <i>Patronage, Benefaction and Gift-Exchange</i>	195
5.8. Conclusion	201
6. First and Second Thessalonians: Limits on Sharing ...	203
6.1. Introduction	203
6.2. Thessalonica	203
6.2.1. <i>The City</i>	203
6.2.2. <i>The Church</i>	205
6.3. First Thessalonians	209
6.3.1. <i>Introduction</i>	209
6.3.2. <i>First Thessalonians 4.9–12</i>	210
6.3.3. <i>First Thessalonians 5.14–15</i>	214
6.3.4. <i>Other Texts</i>	215
6.4. Second Thessalonians	217
6.4.1. <i>Introduction</i>	217
6.4.2. <i>Second Thessalonians 3.6–15</i>	219
6.5. Possible Backgrounds	223
6.5.1. <i>Eschatology</i>	223
6.5.2. <i>Suffering and Persecution</i>	226
6.5.3. <i>Patronage</i>	226
6.5.4. <i>Famine</i>	227
6.5.5. <i>Gnosticism</i>	228
6.5.6. <i>Cynics and Philosophers</i>	228
6.5.7. <i>Views on Work</i>	229
6.5.8. <i>Living Quarters: Tenements or Households?</i>	230
6.6. The Example of Sharing in 1 and 2 Thessalonians	231
6.7. Comparisons	233
6.7.1. <i>Epicureans</i>	233
6.7.2. <i>Family Life</i>	235
6.7.3. <i>Macedonian Associations</i>	237
6.7.4. <i>Patronage</i>	239
6.8. Conclusion	240

7. Sharing Possession in Community in the NT: Christian Distinctives	242
7.1. Summary	242
7.2. Common Characteristics of the NT Examples	244
7.3. Comparisons with the Surrounding Culture	246
7.4. Similarities to the Cultural Context	247
7.5. Differences from the Cultural Context.....	248
7.6. Consistent Distinctives	249
7.7. Motivation	251
7.8. Conclusion	251
7.9. Future Research Possibilities	252
Appendix 1: The Link between the Community at Khirbet Qumran and the Essenes	253
Bibliography	259

1. Introduction

This thesis will look at the theology and practice of the sharing of possessions in community in the NT by considering a range of NT texts, examining them in relationship to their settings and to one another, and also considering whether there are patterns in the ways the early Christians shared possessions in comparison with their surrounding contexts.

Possessions, money, resources and justice are themes that occur frequently in the NT. Wallis points out the centrality of wealth and poverty within scripture and notes that 'some have even suggested [it] is the second most common topic found there, the first being idolatry.'¹ He continues by noting that one out of every 16 verses in the NT; one out of every 10 verses in the Synoptic gospels and one out of every 5 verses in James addresses the theme.²

Use of and attitudes towards possessions and wealth are also important contemporary topics, particularly within a globalising and changing world. In *Is there a Gospel for the Rich?*, Harries argues that it is particularly pertinent to ask questions about how to live as a Christian in a capitalist society, because of the end of communism, the rise of the Christian right and the growth of an evangelical social ethic.³

In this chapter, we highlight the range of material addressing questions around possessions in the NT. First, we look at authors who address contemporary situations and questions about wealth and sharing possessions and who use the NT as part of how they address those situations and questions. We then highlight scholars who approach the NT from an ethical standpoint and consider possessions within that context. Thirdly, authors who consider the NT approach to possessions and sharing within a wider historical or topical study will be considered. For these three categories, representative scholars are chosen to show the breadth of approaches, but the review does not aim to be exhaustive in its coverage of these areas.

We then look at authors who consider possessions in general in the NT or particular questions around possessions, before looking at those who consider the

¹ J. Wallis, *The Call to Conversion*, Tring: Lion, 1981, 57.

² Wallis, *Call*, 58.

³ R. Harries, *Is there a Gospel for the Rich?*, London: Mowbray, 1992, 6-7.

sharing of possessions in the NT. We will then show how this study will contribute to existing research in this area, both in depth and approach.

1.1. Literature Review

1.1.1. Contemporary Questions

Many contemporary studies of possessions, poverty and riches have significant sections on the NT and use the NT to support various approaches to possessions and wealth. In *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, Ronald Sider looks at the OT and NT texts and highlights God's bias for and care for the poor, and God as the ultimate owner of all things.⁴ In a similar vein Jim Wallis highlights the centrality of wealth and possessions in Scripture and argues that conversion should affect believers' economic lives.⁵ Miranda claims that the original Christian practice in the New Testament was communistic, classless and in this world and argues for a NT basis for communism.⁶ In contrast Schneider uses the OT and NT to argue for a positive approach to wealth, a 'godly materialism',⁷ arguing that God creates humans for dominion and delight,⁸ and that Jesus was part of the Palestinian middle class.⁹ In *The Kindness that Kills* various scholars argue for capitalism,¹⁰ against the redistribution of wealth,¹¹ against communism¹² and for a focus on individual responsibility and sin.¹³ While in *Is there a Gospel for the Rich?* Richard Harries addresses the challenge of how Christians may live obediently to Jesus' teaching on wealth (particularly Mark 10.17-27) in modern capitalist societies.¹⁴

These studies, which address questions about possessions and wealth from a number of perspectives, highlight the continued importance for Christian faith and

⁴ Ronald J Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977, 60-61, 69-72, 101-04.

⁵ Wallis, *Call*, 6, 57, 69.

⁶ Jose P Miranda, *Communism in the Bible*, London: SCM, 1982, 1-12.

⁷ John Schneider, *Godly Materialism. Rethinking Money and Possessions*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1994, 17.

⁸ Schneider, *Materialism*, 47-58.

⁹ Schneider, *Materialism*, 111-15.

¹⁰ B. Griffiths, 'Christianity and Capitalism,' in D. Anderson, ed. *The Kindness that Kills*, London: SPCK, 1984, 105-15.

¹¹ G. Dawson, 'God's Creation, Wealth Creation and the Idle Redistributors,' in D. Anderson, ed. *The Kindness that Kills*, London: SPCK, 1984, 13-20.

¹² M. Pomian-Srzednicki and A. Tomský, 'Marxism: The Compulsion to Neighbourly Love,' in D. Anderson, ed. *The Kindness that Kills*, London: SPCK, 1984, 116-22.

¹³ W. Oddie, 'Christian Socialism: An Old Heresy?,' in D. Anderson, ed. *The Kindness that Kills*, London: SPCK, 1984, 123-33.

¹⁴ Harries, *Gospel*, particularly pages 1-8.

witness of how believers handle possessions. They show the complexities that surround questions about possessions and also the different levels at which the questions may be asked: personal, Christian community and society.

These contemporary studies highlight both the complexity and breadth of the issues involved. While societal and world structures, and an individual's relationship to wealth or poverty are key research topics, this study will focus on the way believers hold possessions in relation to one another.

1.1.2. *Ethical Studies*

Given what has already been noted about the extent of the NT devoted to questions of wealth, poverty and possessions, it is unsurprising that NT ethicists often include a section on possessions or wealth. For example William Lillie has a brief chapter on 'The New Testament Attitude to Wealth'.¹⁵ Burrridge and Hays both note the diversity of texts on possessions within the NT and propose particular approaches to forming ethical expectations from diverse texts.¹⁶ Burrridge investigates the way *bioi* invited imitation and places the Gospels within the *bioi* genre.¹⁷ He also focuses on the need for discipleship in community¹⁸ and aims to hold a tension between rigorous teaching and inclusive community,¹⁹ although he does not always establish how this tension works out.²⁰ Hays aims to place NT texts in context before he begins what he describes as the synthetic task (placing texts in their canonical context and drawing out common themes)²¹ and concludes that the NT does not provide one set particular set of rules for how believers are to approach possessions.²² Meeks' *The Moral World of the First Christians* focuses on the ethical formation of early Christians. He looks at the social setting of first century Christians and how language and ideas were used to form morals.²³

These ethical studies show the importance of attitudes to and handling of possessions within Christian thought. They also highlight how studying the cultural background to the biblical texts and the genre of the texts is essential in order to understand the practice and theology within them.

¹⁵ W. Lillie, *Studies in New Testament Ethics*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961, 93–103.

¹⁶ Richard A Burrridge, *Imitating Jesus*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007, 131–37, 352–401; R. B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, London: Continuum, 1997, 7, 466.

¹⁷ Burrridge, *Jesus*, 28–29, 78.

¹⁸ Burrridge, *Jesus*, 50.

¹⁹ Burrridge, *Jesus*, 78.

²⁰ For example Matt 10.34–35; John 2.13–22.

²¹ Hays, *Vision*, 5.

²² Hays, *Vision*, 469.

²³ W. A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.

1.1.3. NT Approaches to Possessions in Wider Studies

There are a number of studies that consider NT approaches to wealth, poverty or possessions within wider topical or historical studies. In *Faith and Wealth*, Gonzalez presents a history of Christian views of economics and wealth. In his NT chapter, he has a particular focus on κοινωνία, which he sees as including both material and spiritual fellowship, where believers respond to the needs of those less fortunate.²⁴ While Gonzalez focuses on Acts 2 and 4, he notes similar approaches to wealth in the gifts in Acts 11 and 2 Cor 8 and 9,²⁵ and suggests the possibility of examining these and other NT texts to explore whether examples with similar characteristics exist elsewhere in the NT.²⁶ Grant includes two chapters about possessions and their use in his study of *Early Christianity and Society* and traces the development of Christian thought from the NT to Constantine, as well as looking at Jewish giving and the OT background to the early church. He also explores similarities between early Christian groups and the Pythagoreans, Essenes and Therapeutae.²⁷ Similarly Hengel looks at possessions through time in *Property and Riches in the Early Church*.²⁸ He argues that eschatological expectations led to initial sharing ‘love communism’,²⁹ which then stopped as the focus changed from eschatological expectation to mission, and as the church grew in ways that would have required greater organisation and structure for such sharing to continue.³⁰ Hengel argues that the two strands of criticism of property (James and Revelation) and self-sufficiency (Paul) are brought together in a compromise situation where manual labour and moderate possessions are seen as positive and care for the poor is encouraged, for example in Luke.³¹ When Hengel explores the relevance of early church approaches to possessions to contemporary Christian life, his first thesis is that there is no one doctrine of property.³²

Hoppe’s study looks at poverty and the poor in the Bible from the Torah through to the NT, and also in the Rabbinic Tradition.³³ He notes the diversity of

²⁴ Justo L. Gonzalez, *Faith and Wealth. A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance and Use of Money*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990, 71–91.

²⁵ Gonzalez, *Faith*, 86.

²⁶ Gonzalez, *Faith*, 84.

²⁷ Robert M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society*, London: Collins, 1978, 100–01.

²⁸ Martin Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church*, London: SCM, 1974.

²⁹ Hengel, *Property*, 31–34.

³⁰ Hengel, *Property*, 35–41.

³¹ Hengel, *Property*, 60–73.

³² Hengel, *Property*, 85.

³³ Leslie J. Hoppe, *There Shall be No Poor among You*, Nashville: Abingdon, 2004.

material, but also the common belief that ‘material, economic poverty is an outrage’³⁴ and the need for believers to work against oppression and modify the way they ‘own and use economic good.’³⁵ Hoppe’s study is primarily about attitudes to and responses to poverty, rather than the sharing of possessions. However he does touch upon sharing possessions as one of the responses to poverty and as he does so, he points out the basis of such sharing is the relationship between Christians as brothers and sisters.³⁶

While the studies so far in this section have considered attitudes to wealth, poverty or possessions through time including the NT period, Saxby considers the sharing of possessions in Christian community through time. As well as considering the NT material, he also covers possible parallels in Graeco-Roman thought as well as communities such as the Therapeutae and the Essenes.³⁷ He provides a helpful overview and wide-ranging examples, however the scope of his study means that the NT texts cannot be considered in depth and he focuses primarily on Acts 2 and 4.

The studies we have looked at so far in this section consider some aspect of possessions in the NT as part of a study of the wider literature; Panikulam addresses the topic from a different angle. He considers the meaning of *κοινωνία* in the NT.³⁸ He looks particularly at 1 Cor 11, 2 Cor 8-9 and Acts 2.42. He argues that *κοινωνία* is spiritual, practical and relational and is rooted in God’s generosity, the example of Jesus and the good news of the gospel.³⁹ Panikulam’s study is helpful in highlighting some of the texts where sharing of possessions occurs and indicating some of the motivating and theological factors, including: imitating Jesus; relating to believers as brothers and sisters in Christ; and assisting the poor.

These historical and topical studies show the diversity of texts and practice. Hoppe also highlights communality across the diversity⁴⁰ and together with Saxby

³⁴ Hoppe, *Poor*, 171.

³⁵ Hoppe, *Poor*, 172.

³⁶ Hoppe, *Poor*, 156, 160.

³⁷ T. J. Saxby, *Pilgrims of a Common Life. Christian Community of Goods through the Centuries*, Scottdale: Herald, 1987, 20-28.

³⁸ George Panikulam, *Koinōnia in the New Testament. A Dynamic Expression of Christian Life*, Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979. Similarly Osthathios approaches sharing from a doctrinal and imitatio Dei perspective (Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, *Sharing God and a Sharing World*, Thiruvalla: Christhava Sahithya Samithy, 1999).

³⁹ Panikulam, *Koinōnia*, 48, 50, 117, 123, 129.

⁴⁰ Hoppe, *Poor*, 171-2.

and Panikulam points to the importance of identity in Christ and with others who are in Christ for how believers share possessions and what motivates them to do so.

1.1.4. *New Testament Studies*

We now turn to consider studies that focus on possessions from an NT perspective, including those that also look at the OT.⁴¹ In *Neither Poverty nor Riches* Blomberg looks at the teaching of the Bible on possessions (OT, intertestamental literature and NT) in the context of the increasing global disparities in wealth.⁴² He takes a wide ranging approach including, rather than omitting, texts in instances where there is potential for a variety of interpretations, for example the parable of the talents in Matthew's gospel.

In chapters 4–7, Blomberg addresses the NT texts. Apart from separating off the teachings of Jesus in the Synoptic gospels, Blomberg works his way through the New Testament book by book. In his final chapter, Blomberg draws together themes from throughout the book and gives some suggestions of applications.

Blomberg argues from Jesus' teaching that the 'gospel is consistently holistic'⁴³ and that the gospels do not include rich followers of Jesus who are not generous.⁴⁴

In the chapter on 'Earliest Christianity', Blomberg considers James and Acts. In Acts he argues for the historicity of the communal practice in Acts 2 and 4,⁴⁵ but does not distinguish between the practices described in the two passages. He argues that as Acts continues there is an absence of further references to the communal practice of the early chapters, more examples of affluent Christians and continued concern for the poor.⁴⁶

Blomberg's chapter on 'The life and teaching of Paul' includes books often seen as deutero-Pauline. Within the chapter he notes the issues of patronage and influence and Paul's concern that such practices may lead to dependency (Thessalonica) or to Christian patrons thinking that they can buy influence

⁴¹ Studies which focus on one particular part of the NT have been omitted, for example: David L. Mealand, *Poverty and Expectation in the Gospels*, London: SPCK, 1980; D. E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of his Day*, Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1986; Kyoung-Jin Kim, *Stewardship and Almsgiving in Luke's Theology*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998; Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remembering the Poor. Paul, Poverty and the Greco-Roman World*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

⁴² Craig L. Blomberg, *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, Leicester: Apollos, 1999.

⁴³ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 145.

⁴⁴ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 145.

⁴⁵ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 160–61.

⁴⁶ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 174–5.

(Corinth).⁴⁷ He argues that Paul advocates a way of life for Christians that involves them giving without thought to reward in this life in contrast to the patronage practices in the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁸

In the final chapter, Blomberg summarises his conclusions from the previous chapters. Interestingly he concludes that both Luke and Paul call well-off believers ‘merely to give from their surplus’,⁴⁹ which seems milder than the text in 2 Cor 8 and Blomberg’s own comments on it, where he identifies giving amongst the poor in Macedonia as being sacrificial.⁵⁰ In addition to reiterating his conclusions from individual sections, he identifies the following themes, which he argues run through the biblical texts: possessions as a good gift to enjoy;⁵¹ possessions as ‘*primary means of turning human hearts away from God*’;⁵² the need for individuals to be transformed and redeemed in their stewardship of possessions;⁵³ and the existence of ‘*extremes of wealth and poverty which are in and of themselves intolerable*’.⁵⁴

One of the major strengths of Blomberg’s work is its comprehensive nature. *Neither Poverty nor Riches* proves a good overview of the biblical material. Blomberg also brings out the historical background of the different texts he considers, not only in the intertestamental chapter, but also elsewhere and he makes reference to how themes develop through the Bible and ways in which the specific texts have been interpreted. This concern for historical setting enables Blomberg to comment on different issues that may be pertinent to the interpretation of the passages, for example patronage in Thessalonians and Corinth and the ‘tenuous economy’⁵⁵ in Jerusalem.

However the scope and breadth of the work is also its weakness as it does not provide the opportunity within the space constraints to compare and contrast texts in much detail. Blomberg mentions briefly Luke’s ‘call for a break in conventional patron-client relationships’⁵⁶ but does not have space to expand this or compare it with Paul’s approach.

⁴⁷ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 180–81, 183.

⁴⁸ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 212.

⁴⁹ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 243.

⁵⁰ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 191–2.

⁵¹ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 243.

⁵² Blomberg, *Poverty*, 244 (his italics).

⁵³ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 244.

⁵⁴ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 245 (his italics).

⁵⁵ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 162.

⁵⁶ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 227.

Blomberg provides an excellent overview of the Bible's teaching on possessions and indicates the importance of context to understand the teaching, but leaves scope for studies that are more focused and thus more detailed. Blomberg also looks at possessions in general and so while he includes aspects of how believers relate with their possessions to one another, his primary focus is not on the new relationships resulting from being in Christ and their implications for believers' approaches to possessions. This study will focus more specifically on the practice and theology of sharing possessions within the New Testament.

In *Wealth as Peril and Obligation*, Wheeler develops her PhD thesis and aims to set up a method for assessing the moral witness of the NT,⁵⁷ which she tests by looking at the NT's approach to 'the moral status of wealth and the ownership of property and possessions in relation to Christian faith'.⁵⁸

In analysing past proposals of how the NT is authoritative for ethics, she identifies issues around incorporating the diversity of scripture, ways of appealing to scripture and the nature of scripture, and control and when scripture is open to challenge.⁵⁹ Wheeler then formulates her own proposals. She argues that an appropriate methodology needs to take account of the whole canon and all references to a particular issue; it must address areas where texts seem to diverge; it should both take account of the existence of moral rules within the text, and acknowledge that changed contexts may change outcomes and in instances of disregarding rules show why; it must recognise implicit assumptions in the text and also the limits of a methodology⁶⁰ and thus always be open to being challenged by '*continued conversation with the canon it seeks to interpret*'.⁶¹

Wheeler puts this proposal into practice by considering four texts in detail: Mark 10.17-31 and the way 'faithfulness might entail leaving them [possessions] behind';⁶² Luke 12.22-34 and the call for the people of God to 'live proleptically under God's reign';⁶³ 2 Cor 8.1-15 and the call to voluntary, sacrificial and generous giving;⁶⁴ and James 5.1-6 where she identifies an ambiguity towards the power

⁵⁷ S. E. Wheeler, *Wealth as Peril and Obligation*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, xv.

⁵⁸ Wheeler, *Wealth*, back cover.

⁵⁹ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 1-17.

⁶⁰ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 32-35.

⁶¹ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 36 (her italics).

⁶² Wheeler, *Wealth*, 56.

⁶³ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 72.

⁶⁴ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 87-88.

which comes with wealth and an acknowledgement that riches tend to ‘distort the priorities of their possessors’.⁶⁵

Wheeler, following her proposal, looks at the canonical context of the NT and runs through various NT texts, but is more selective than Blomberg in what she identifies as pertinent to consider, for example she omits the parables of the talents, the vineyard and the unforgiving servant, all of which Blomberg includes.

She draws out particular themes within the canon, first within the OT and intertestamental tradition.⁶⁶ Then in the NT, she identifies four themes: ‘Wealth as a Stumbling Block’; ‘Wealth as a Competing Object of Devotion’; ‘Wealth as a Symptom of Economic Injustice’; and ‘Wealth as a Resource for Human Needs’.⁶⁷

In her concluding chapter Wheeler argues that the NT does not simply provide rules about wealth, although some rules remain, but rather that studying the NT leads to a series of questions for communities in different circumstances and cultures to consider about identity, worship, justice and care.⁶⁸

Wheeler argues for both the variety of the biblical witness about wealth and the centrality of decisions about wealth to the life of believers.⁶⁹

One of the strengths of her methodology is that it takes into account the diversity of the canon, while stressing the importance of the canon and the historical background to the various texts. It is not always clear why she chooses particular passages in preference to other passages that she highlights as relevant. Occasionally her conclusions, for example that the overarching theme in Luke was ‘Banishing Fear’,⁷⁰ seem to neglect the diversity within the text.

Wheeler’s book, as the title suggests, is primarily about the moral status of wealth and thus does not necessarily focus on the identity of Christians in relationship with one another or believers sharing with one another, which is the focus of this thesis.

In addition Wheeler uses her proposed methodology to draw out principles from individual NT texts in the light of the NT canon. In contrast this thesis identifies common characteristics across NT texts and then suggests ways this approach might be used with other areas where there is diversity in the NT witness.

⁶⁵ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 104.

⁶⁶ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 123, 124, 125, 126.

⁶⁷ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 127, 129, 131, 132.

⁶⁸ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 138–143.

⁶⁹ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 134.

⁷⁰ Wheeler, *Wealth*, 69.

Witherington writes about Christian attitudes to money and the use of wealth in the context of the 2008 financial crisis and includes chapters on the OT background (creation and wisdom),⁷¹ economics in NT times, Jesus' teaching, James, Luke-Acts, Paul and Revelation. Witherington builds on Sondra Wheeler's book, particularly in his chapter 'Towards a New Testament Theology of Money, Stewardship, and Giving'⁷² and covers some of the ground of Craig Blomberg's *Neither Poverty nor Riches*. Being shorter than Blomberg's book, *Jesus and Money* does not cover as much ground, instead Witherington spends longer on specific texts and questions. For example in his chapter on Paul, he considers the question of whether and how ministers should be remunerated.⁷³

Witherington is clear that attitudes to and use of money are issues both for institutions / nations and for individuals.⁷⁴ He makes a number of practical suggestions about how believers might apply NT teaching and sees such application as specific to each individual or family.⁷⁵

As might be expected, Witherington's strength is his social and rhetorical analysis of the backgrounds to the texts. Witherington chooses a range of texts, including those that present challenges for interpretation and potentially contradictory approaches. Despite his inclusion of Revelation and comments about institutions / nations, Witherington's primary focus is the individual believer or family of believers, rather than the church or Christian community.

Bassler considers the ways in which people asked for money in New Testament times in order to help those 'who would like to reflect more deeply on the theological and ethical aspects of fund-raising in the church'.⁷⁶ She considers the cultural and economic background of the NT world. While she covers some of the same examples as this thesis, she approaches them with questions about fundraising rather than sharing possessions. Therefore there are only occasional points of contact, for example her argument that Paul urges believers to give to the collection in response to grace.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Although he omits the Exodus story, the background of the land as gift and the practice of Jubilee.

⁷² Ben Witherington III, *Jesus and Money*, London: SPCK, 2010, 141-152.

⁷³ Witherington, *Jesus*, 116-21.

⁷⁴ Witherington, *Jesus*, 131-32.

⁷⁵ Witherington, *Jesus*, 153-64.

⁷⁶ J. M. Bassler, *God and Mammon. Asking for Money in the New Testament*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1991, 7.

⁷⁷ Bassler, *God*, 94, 103.

While these NT studies provide helpful summaries of the material and insight into the cultural and economic contexts, their focus is not primarily in the area of the theology and practice of the sharing of possessions in community, which remains an area which is sparsely covered. One author who does examine this area from a joint NT and philosophical point of view is Luke Timothy Johnson.

1.1.5. Sharing Possessions in the New Testament

In *Sharing Possessions*, Johnson considers ‘how the Bible speaks to this mystery of human possessing and possessiveness’⁷⁸ and argues that there is no one particular mandate within the Bible, but that possessions and their use are key issues in the life of a Christian and are symbolic of our relationship with God.⁷⁹

Johnson argues that the Bible has many references about possessions that do not seem to be consistent.⁸⁰ He uses Luke–Acts to show this, noting among other examples that in Luke–Acts ‘Jesus demands complete renunciation of possessions for disciples’,⁸¹ but also that ‘disciples of Jesus are to give alms to help the poor and provide hospitality’.⁸² He also identifies the potential within narrative passages of accounts not necessarily being paradigmatic.⁸³ Johnson rejects the various mandates as rules and thus argues that in order to address the complexity of contemporary economic situations it is necessary to look for a theological understanding of possessions.⁸⁴

Johnson’s second chapter is then devoted to this quest. He identifies the ambiguity between being and having inherent in being physical beings and argues that ‘The Bible bears witness everywhere that we humans are symbolic creatures, whose attitudes and convictions are expressed in the language of the body.’⁸⁵ Thus he argues that ‘Our bodies are symbols because they reveal, make manifest, our inner emotional states and attitudes’⁸⁶ and therefore we use our possessions to symbolise “our self-disposition”.⁸⁷ Johnson goes on to relate idolatry to possessiveness.⁸⁸

⁷⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, London: SCM, 1981, 1.

⁷⁹ Johnson, *Possessions*, 9.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *Possessions*, 12.

⁸¹ Johnson, *Possessions*, 16.

⁸² Johnson, *Possessions*, 17.

⁸³ Johnson, *Possessions*, 21.

⁸⁴ Johnson, *Possessions*, 28–32.

⁸⁵ Johnson, *Possessions*, 32.

⁸⁶ Johnson, *Possessions*, 36.

⁸⁷ Johnson, *Possessions*, 40.

⁸⁸ Johnson, *Possessions*, 54–58.

In the third chapter, Johnson argues that just as love and faith can only be situationally expressed, so also the way believers share possessions should be situationally expressed.⁸⁹ Therefore there is no one way to implement sharing possessions, and were there to be one, there would be a danger of this way becoming a human possession.⁹⁰

Having rejected a single approach to sharing possessions, in his fourth chapter, Johnson critically considers two of the specific ways of sharing possessions shown within Scripture: the community of goods and almsgiving. Johnson sees a number of problems with the community of goods and identifies it as strengthening leaders; increasing authority structures and social control; leading to inward looking groups, where individual identity is merged into the community identity; and not necessarily addressing the problem of human desire.⁹¹ He then turns to almsgiving and identifies its long history in the OT and also in later Jewish thought such as the Mishnah and Talmud and argues for its consideration on the grounds that 'it is communal without being communistic' and 'deals with humans in concrete rather than ideal terms'.⁹²

In *Sharing Possessions*, Johnson helpfully identifies the multiplicity of approaches to possessions in the NT and his resulting philosophical and theological response places possessions as central to believers' lives of faith, which is consonant with the consistent focus within Scripture on how believers use possessions.

However Johnson appears to critique more strongly the community of goods than he does almsgiving, possibly due to his experience of nine years as a monk.⁹³ For example, one could argue that in some situations of almsgiving, there might be dangers of control and influence as evidenced in patronage systems where reciprocity is expected. For in such systems, there is not a community of goods, but there is a giving to those in need, but alongside the giving come influence and possibly control.

Additionally the comprehensive nature of Johnson's approach, which very helpfully maintains the centrality of possessions in the life of a Christian, may run the risk of becoming an ideology of the type he critiques, by tying approaches to possessions to a single interpretation of identity. For Johnson focuses on the

⁸⁹ Johnson, *Possessions*, 108.

⁹⁰ Johnson, *Possessions*, 115.

⁹¹ Johnson, *Possessions*, 124-25.

⁹² Johnson, *Possessions*, 139.

⁹³ Johnson, *Possessions*, backcover.

relationship between a person and God and the symbolic nature of possessions within that relationship, without including the identity of God as Trinity or the implications of this and 'being in Christ' on the identity of Christians and the church. This thesis will focus on sharing possessions in community and relationships between believers as well as relationship with God.

Johnson's response to the lack of one mandate is: to develop a theological approach to possessions; to assess the different mandates presented within the Bible; and to argue for one being more practical. This thesis will approach NT diversity by considering a range of diverse NT examples in context, and then identifying common characteristics across the NT examples, as well as commonalities in the way believers responded to their contexts. The rationale for this approach will be explored in the next section.

1.2. Approach of this Thesis

The studies considered above indicate that possessions, wealth and poverty are key issues in the NT and highlight the importance of questions about possessions in both contemporary Christian thought and in the NT. These questions occur on a number of different levels: the choices of individual believers with regard to wealth, poverty and possessions; how Christians relate to one another with their possessions and how they are held; and Christian approaches to economics and social welfare. The focus within the literature tends to be predominantly either on the individual or the state (or sometimes both) rather than on how possessions are held and shared within Christian communities, despite the way Panikulam highlights the communal identity and practice of Christians within the NT.

Some research does address how possessions are held and shared with the Christian community. For example Saxby examines sharing of possessions in Christian community through time,⁹⁴ and Hoppe notes the way that for Paul sharing was part of being brothers and sisters.⁹⁵ However in the majority of these cases the scope of the research (over time, or across a wide range of literature) or the focus of the research (on poverty, or attitudes to wealth) precludes an in-depth examination of the practice and theology of sharing of possessions within the NT. For example, Gonzalez focuses on *κοινωνία* within his New Testament chapter and argues that if it were possible to show that there were other examples of sharing which included sharing material possessions in response to poverty, the sharing of

⁹⁴ Saxby, *Pilgrims*.

⁹⁵ Hoppe, *Poor*, 160.

possessions in Acts 2 and 4 could be considered indicative of the wider NT approach to wealth.⁹⁶ He briefly mentions the collection for the poor in Jerusalem and the collection in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, but notes that he has only covered a few of the relevant passages.⁹⁷ This thesis covers more of the relevant texts.

Johnson is the one author who specifically addresses the question of sharing of possessions in the NT. However he also primarily considers Acts 2 and 4, and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, so there remains space for considering a wider number of NT texts. Johnson also addresses the question of sharing possessions primarily from the perspectives of the individual's relationship with God, the nature of being / having, and idolatry. Thus he does not examine the ways in which communal Christian identity influences sharing possessions. Therefore as we examine different NT examples of sharing, we will consider how the sharing that takes place relates to the identity of the believers with one another.

The studies also noted the diversity of NT texts relating to possessions. Hengel and Johnson, alongside others, conclude that there is not one doctrine or paradigm for sharing of possessions.⁹⁸ Different authors have addressed this diversity in different ways. Lillie explains it by suggesting that the initial sharing in Acts gave way to other practices due to 'the hardness of men's hearts'.⁹⁹ Johnson argues that almsgiving has a longer history within the Jewish tradition and is preferable to community of goods as it does not include the issues of power and control inherent with community of goods.¹⁰⁰ Hengel argues that after Acts 2 and 4, the church grew in size and it did not have the scale of organisation required to continue with such sharing, nor the desire to obtain it.¹⁰¹ He also argues that the early church made a shift from an eschatological perspective to a mission focused perspective and that this also lies behind the change in practice.¹⁰² However, generally, sharing is considered as one particular way of approaching possessions, rather than the diversity of examples of sharing being explored. This thesis will focus on diverse examples of sharing possessions in community within the NT.

⁹⁶ Gonzalez, *Faith*, 84.

⁹⁷ Gonzalez, *Faith*, 86, 88.

⁹⁸ Hengel, *Property*, 84; Johnson, *Possessions*, 9. Hays and Wheeler argue for the need to consider a range of texts to gain a NT perspective (Hays, *Vision*, 7; Wheeler, *Wealth*, 33).

⁹⁹ Lillie, *Studies*, 103.

¹⁰⁰ Johnson, *Possessions*, 123-127, 131-139.

¹⁰¹ Hengel, *Property*, 45.

¹⁰² Hengel, *Property*, 35-41.

Hays and Meeks both demonstrate the importance of considering historical and cultural backgrounds to texts in order to identify their ethical perspective, while Burridge identifies the importance of considering the genre of the text. This thesis therefore examines a range of NT texts. For each of the texts, the background to the theology and practice evidenced in the text is explored and possible causes or influences on the particular theology and practice expressed within the text are highlighted using exegetical and social-scientific approaches. The theology and practice evidenced and portrayed in the text is examined alongside examples within the surrounding culture of similar practice, to establish in what ways the practice and theology of the early church was similar to and different from its surroundings. These comparisons are then compared with each other, which enables this thesis to show that there are common characteristics of how Christians shared across the NT examples. It also shows that there are ways in which Christian practice and theology within the NT is consistently different from its surrounding contexts, thus indicating a commonality in distinctives from the surrounding cultures.

1.2.1. New Testament Examples

In order to address the diversity of the NT, we consider a number of texts, which show examples of sharing of possessions. The texts are chosen from across the Gospels, Acts and Pauline Epistles in order to provide a range of examples of different kinds of sharing. The examples chosen allow us to consider a range of possibilities in terms of: what is shared; the distance over which sharing happens; the geographical locations that sharing happens in; and practice. We consider examples that show sharing within a community and those that show sharing between communities, however we do not consider the sharing shown in support for leaders within a community or from another community, thus we have not considered 1 Cor 9. We have limited ourselves to the Gospels, Acts and the generally undisputed Pauline Epistles due to the space available in the thesis.¹⁰³ We have not examined the Gospel teaching on sharing, as it tends to be more general teaching rather than referring to a specific example of sharing in community.

In chapter 2 we consider the example within John's gospel of the common purse, an example of sharing between a relatively small number of itinerant people,

¹⁰³ Therefore while 1 Tim 5 and Jas 2 provide possible examples of sharing within a community we do not consider them within this thesis: 1 Tim 5 because its authorship is disputed and Jas 2 because it is outside the group of texts being considered. In addition James provides less evidence of the community / communities receiving the letter than the Corinthian and Thessalonian letters do and thus possible comparators would not be able to be identified with the same degree of confidence.

with the money possibly coming from those outside the group. We reference the other gospels where they throw light on the practice of the historical Jesus and his disciples. In chapter 3 we look at two examples from Acts: first, the selling, sharing, and holding in common of possessions within a community (Acts 2, 4) and secondly, the sharing of possessions with believers in a community in one location to those in another location (Acts 11). Chapters 4 to 6 consider three examples from the Pauline literature. Chapter 4 examines the sharing of food in one particular community in 1 Corinthians 11. Chapter 5 explores the sharing of money with others who are at a distance geographically and culturally (2 Corinthians 8 and 9). Chapter 6 looks at the example of the ἄτακτοι in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and the limits or boundaries to sharing within a community which are expressed within the two letters.

Thus our examples include texts from different authors and genres within the NT, which portray sharing of different types occurring within different contexts.

1.2.2. Key Questions

For each text, we ask a number of questions. We examine the background and context of the example and ask what kind of example of sharing is shown and whether it is positive or negative. For some texts there are different layers of examples. For example in John's gospel, there is the example, which John presents to us and there is the example of what the historical Jesus and his disciples did. In such cases we identify and distinguish which layer we are working with.

We ask what motivates the sharing and whether there are particular theological reasons for the sharing. We look at whether need is the overarching motivational factor or whether there are other influences. The existing literature includes little about the way the corporate identity of believers impacted on the question of the sharing of possessions, therefore we ask how individual or corporate identity motivated the sharing and what the sharing says about identity.

Various scholars identify the issue of sin and the 'not yet' of Christian community and how it impacted approaches to possessions.¹⁰⁴ We therefore bear in mind the question of sin and the 'not yet' as we examine each NT example.

As we consider examples of sharing between believers, we ask whether these examples indicate sharing with non-believers as well as with other believers.

¹⁰⁴ Harries, *Gospel*; Lillie, *Studies*; Oddie, 'Socialism'.

Having examined the examples in the NT text in relation to the genre of the text and historical and literary background, we identify comparators for each NT example, which show similar situations and practice, and which are likely to be known by or familiar to the community in the NT example (or where others use them as comparators at the time).¹⁰⁵ The comparators are non-Christian in order to investigate the ways in which the early church's practice was similar to and different from surrounding practice and to identify distinctive elements of how Christians shared possessions.¹⁰⁶

We compare the NT examples to the comparators and identify similarities and differences. For example in Acts 11, the church in Antioch responds to a situation of predicted famine in Judaea and we compare its response with examples of how famine was responded to in the Graeco-Roman world.

1.2.3. Comparing the Examples

Having examined the examples in each of the NT texts we compare them with one another and identify common characteristics. We consider whether there are reasons within their contexts for these similarities and differences. We then compare how they are similar to and distinct from the examples in the surrounding culture and whether there are any commonalities in distinctives or similarities from the surrounding culture.

Chapter 7 draws out the common characteristics across the NT examples as well as similarities and differences in how the early church shared possessions compared with the surrounding contexts.

1.2.4. Results

This study provides an overview of the breadth of examples of the sharing of possessions in the NT and an analysis of the practice and theology shown by the examples. It identifies common characteristics across different kinds of sharing in the NT. While other studies draw comparisons between NT examples and the surrounding culture, this thesis provides a systematic study across different NT

¹⁰⁵ Thus the Therapeutae are not used as a comparator in chapter 3 as they were a Diaspora community where the primary evidence is for their presence in Alexandria and the early church in Jerusalem is unlikely to have been familiar with them. In contrast we have included the Pythagoreans in chapter 3 because Josephus compares them to the Essenes (*Ant.* 15.371), although we conclude that it is not very likely that most of the early believers would have known of the Pythagoreans.

¹⁰⁶ Thus the Didache is not used as a comparator as it provides evidence of Christian practice. Further rationale for individual comparators is provided within each chapter (see §2.2.1, §2.2.2, §2.2.3, §3.2.3.1, §3.2.3.2, §3.2.3.3, §3.3.3, §4.8, §5.7.1, §5.7.3, §5.7.4, §6.7.1, §6.7.2, §6.7.3, §6.7.4).

examples and their comparators. It is therefore able to identify consistent distinctives in how Christians shared possessions in relation to their surrounding cultures.

It provides a basis for exploring sharing possessions in contemporary Christian ethical studies, by providing an overview of the practice and theology of the NT with particular reference to Jesus and his disciples, the earliest Christians and Paul; and an analysis of how early Christian practice and theology related to the surrounding culture and whether it was influenced by it. The methodology used is a helpful contribution to ways of considering areas of divergence and difference in the NT.

2. The γλωσσόκομον in John

2.1. The Practice and Theology of Jesus and his Disciples

There are a number of references in the gospels to Jesus and his disciples having a shared purse (12.6; 13.29)¹⁰⁷ and receiving money (Luke 8.3) from others towards their needs. This chapter considers the two references in the NT to the γλωσσόκομον, both in John. This example shows sharing between a small group of people for their own use and for the needs of the poor, which the early church may have looked back on. This chapter examines how these passages describe the practice of the common purse. It then considers other passages in the gospels that may hint at a common purse or collective approach to money / possessions, for example the hospitality of Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Luke 10 and John 12, and the support of the women in Luke 8. Having considered the practice of Jesus and his disciples in the gospels and particularly in relation to the γλωσσόκομον, it considers possible parallels to the practice of Jesus and his disciples: rabbis and their disciples, the Essenes / Qumran and Cynics.

This chapter examines both the historical practice of Jesus and his disciples, and also how John's early readers might have interpreted John's presentation of their practice. It demonstrates that while there are similarities between the practice of Jesus and his disciples and the surrounding cultures, particularly the Essenes / Qumran, there are differences from the surrounding cultures in the boundaries to the group and in the variety of ways of contributing.

2.1.1. Common Purse Passages

The word γλωσσόκομον, often translated 'common purse', was originally the word for a container for carrying mouthpieces for flutes¹⁰⁸ and developed into a word for a case or a container before the first century CE.¹⁰⁹ Moulton and Milligan note that its origin suggests 'small size and portability',¹¹⁰ although it is also used for larger containers (2 Chron 24.8,10 LXX; Josephus *Ant.* 6.11). However, in the occurrences in John, it does appear to refer to a portable container. It may be that γλωσσόκομον is used to allow for the fact that gifts were placed in the

¹⁰⁷ Verse references in this chapter are to John's gospel unless otherwise stated.

¹⁰⁸ MM, 128.

¹⁰⁹ BDAG, xl, 202.

¹¹⁰ MM, 128.

γλωσσόκομον, which might suggest a slightly larger or a different container than the usual purse.¹¹¹

2.1.1.1. *John 12.4-8*

The first reference to the common purse is in John 12, where Mary has anointed Jesus at Bethany. Judas then questions her actions and suggests that the nard could have been sold and the proceeds given to poor. However his motivation was not concern for the poor, but rather that κλέπτῃς ἤν καὶ τὸ γλωσσόκομον ἔχων τὰ βαλλόμενα ἐβάσταζεν (12.6). Beasley-Murray points out that ‘ἐβάσταζεν = “used to take (away)”’ and was used ‘to mean take away (surreptitiously) money’.¹¹² The use of κλέπτῃς and the imperfect of βάσταζω suggest an ongoing situation of stealing rather than an innocent or one off removal of the money. Judas’ comment about the poor suggests that there were instances where items were donated to the group of disciples and then sold, with the money then being added to the common purse, and that money in the common purse could be used to give to the poor.

In response to Judas’ comments, Jesus does not identify Judas as misusing the money, but does say that Mary is preparing him for the day of his burial and notes that the disciples will always have the poor with them, but will not always have him. Brown suggests that, in contemporary rabbinic thought, provision for burial was equated with mercy and was valued more highly than almsgiving, which was equated with showing justice.¹¹³ When *b. Sukkah* 49b reflects on Micah 6.8 it gives three reasons that kindness is better than charity or almsgiving, one of which is that kindness can be done to both the dead and the living, while charity can only be done to the living. However, as Calvin argues, while Jesus’ reply is a reproof to Judas’ hypocrisy, ‘we may learn from it the valuable lesson that alms for relieving the needs of the poor are sacrifices and of a sweet savour to God.’¹¹⁴ This would fit with the fact that Jesus speaks about the disciples always having the poor with them, but not always having the dead to prepare for burial.

2.1.1.2. *John 13.28-29*

The second occurrence of γλωσσόκομον is during the farewell discourse. It follows the prediction of betrayal and the question by the disciple Jesus loved about

¹¹¹ In Luke’s gospel the word βαλλάντιον is used to mean purse in Luke 10.4; 12.33; 22.35-36.

¹¹² George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999, 205.

¹¹³ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John I-XII*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1966, 449. Brown simply references Jeremiah.

¹¹⁴ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries St John 11-21 and First John*, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961, 28.

the identity of the betrayer. After giving Judas a piece of bread dipped in the dish, Jesus instructs him, “Ο ποιεῖς ποιήσον τάχιον (13.27). The disciples presume that because Judas has the common purse, he is being sent on an errand to buy something: either to provide for the feast or to give something to the poor.

While there is uncertainty about which day of the feast this refers to and therefore what kind of work was permissible,¹¹⁵ it is certainly in the vicinity of Passover. Jeremias argues that it was usual for the poor to be supplied with food for Passover,¹¹⁶ however, his sources do not necessarily support his point (*m. Pesah.* 9.11 concerns Passover offerings that have been confused, *b. Git.* 7b is about giving alms) and one that does (*m. Pesah.* 10.1) may well be later. Tobit does provide an example of giving to the poor at festivals (Tobit 1.6–8). Carson suggests that the fact it is night and that the disciples assume that Judas is going to give to the poor, may point to it being Passover – otherwise ‘the next day would have done just as well.’¹¹⁷

In contrast Calvin argues that this expectation indicates customary giving to the poor: ‘For the apostles would not have guessed that He was speaking about the poor unless it had been their custom to help the poor.’¹¹⁸ While the potential giving here seems to be in the context of Passover, Judas’ comments about giving to the poor (12.5) and the fact that giving to the poor in Judaism was not limited to Passover (Josephus *Ant.* 15.299–316, 20.51–53; *m. Shek.* 5.6; *b. Git.* 7b) supports Calvin’s conclusion that it was the disciples’ custom to give to the poor on other occasions.

There are contrasting views of the symbolism of the morsel of bread that Jesus gives to Judas. Keener highlights the two options: first that the bread is a sign of favour or secondly that the dipping is that related to the bitter herbs of the Passover meal and therefore implies a curse.¹¹⁹ However, as it appears that the other disciples do not hear Jesus’ words about giving the bread, or at least do not understand what he is saying about it (13.28–29), it is not possible to learn from their response which of the two options may be taking place.

The bread may have been given to Judas at the point in the Passover celebration where bitter herbs were shared. As each person would have shared

¹¹⁵ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John*, 2nd edn, London: SPCK, 1978, 448.

¹¹⁶ Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, London: SCM, 1966, 54.

¹¹⁷ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Leicester: IVP, 1991, 475.

¹¹⁸ Calvin, *John*, 67.

¹¹⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John Volume 2*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003, 920.

some of the bitter herbs, it may have been less obvious that Jesus was singling Judas out. As each person would have partaken of the bitter herbs,¹²⁰ if Jesus handed the bread to Judas at this point, it would not necessarily follow that he was implying a curse and indeed could imply a sign of favour.¹²¹

2.1.1.3. *Other John Passages*

Apart from the two passages which refer to the γλωσσόκομον there are two other passages which may indicate some sort of common holding of money by Jesus and his disciples. In John 4.8 the disciples go to the city to buy food. This may be indicative of a common purse which the disciples used to supply their needs and Edwards comments that the provision of food for their rabbi was typical behaviour of rabbinic disciples.¹²² While the text does not specify where the money came from or how it was held, it does indicate a communal purchasing of food, which would necessitate some arrangement for paying for it.

Prior to the feeding of the five thousand, there is a conversation between Jesus and Philip about the provision of food for the crowd (6.5). The implication in Jesus' question is that it will be a communal buying of the bread and this may suggest that there is some collective responsibility for money and purchasing, but as with the reference in John 4, this is not spelt out.

2.1.1.4. *Summary of the Common Purse in John*

What do these references indicate about the kind of practice that John portrays and the practice of Jesus and his disciples?

The γλωσσόκομον does not play a major role in the story or theology of John and it seems unlikely that John would have added this detail. Barrett does suggest the link with Judas may have been added by John to discredit Judas.¹²³ However John presents Jesus as one who knows and therefore knows what Judas is up to with the γλωσσόκομον¹²⁴ and there are probably simpler ways for John to make additions that would discredit Judas, without creating the embarrassment of Jesus choosing an unfit treasurer. Keener therefore concludes, 'By the criterion of

¹²⁰ m. *Pesah.* 2.6 notes the herbs that can be eaten to fulfil the duty to eat bitter herbs, thus presuming that it was an obligation for each person to eat bitter herbs.

¹²¹ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966, 2:578. Brown cites Ruth 2.14, where Boaz gives Ruth a morsel of bread to dip in the sour wine and honours her by inviting her to join with his workers in eating.

¹²² Ruth Edwards, *Discovering John*, London: SPCK, 2003, 98. Edwards provides no evidence to support this assertion.

¹²³ Barrett, *John*, 413.

¹²⁴ See §2.1.1.5

embarrassment, it is likely that Judas' role as treasurer stems from genuine historical tradition; appointing someone who misadministered funds could be scandalous, all the more if the one who made the appointment were now claimed to be omniscient.¹²⁵

In addition, we have noted a couple of passages within John which, while they do not mention a common purse, would fit with the practice of a common purse. We will look at passages in the Synoptics which fit with the practice of having a common purse and provide possible further insight into the practice of Jesus and his disciples.

Therefore, since the γλωσσόκομον is not central to John's story and there seems no reason for it to be added in; since Judas' connection to the common purse does not fit with John's portrayal of Jesus and would be an embarrassment to the early church; and since there are other passages which fit the practice, it seems likely that John's portrayal of the common purse and its association with Judas is historical.¹²⁶

As we consider the different Johannine passages about the γλωσσόκομον, what can we conclude about the detail of the practice that John portrays? In general, scholars seem to have more conclusions than the evidence in John seems to sustain.

Various authors hazard a guess as to where the money in the common purse came from. Chrysostom (*Hom. Jo.* 72) and Capper see the money coming from supportive women.¹²⁷ Augustine (*Trac. Ev. Jo.* 40) sees the support as more generally from the 'faithful',¹²⁸ while Carson points to the money coming from 'disciples who cherished Jesus' ministry, like the women mentioned in Luke 8:2,3'.¹²⁹

The reference in Luke 8 does suggest that there were women who contributed to the common purse. While the women are not mentioned specifically in John's gospel as contributing to the common purse, it is interesting to note that Mary's gift of nard (12.3) is a gift from a woman and a gift of considerable value. Additionally Judas' expectation that it could have been sold and the money placed in the common purse would suggest that the money in the common purse

¹²⁵ Keener, *John* 2, 2:865.

¹²⁶ Brown, *John* 1, 1:453.

¹²⁷ Brian J. Capper, 'Holy Community of Life and Property amongst the Poor: A Response to Steve Walton,' *EQ* 80.2 (2008) 113-127, citing 113.

¹²⁸ E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, London: Penguin, 1993, 108.

¹²⁹ Carson, *Gospel*, 429.

included money from significant gifts from individuals, even if it was not limited to such money. However, there seems no reason to assume that rich women were the sole providers of finance, particularly if the boy in John 6 is an example to be emulated (6.9). For the example of the boy suggests that even those who are not particularly wealthy could and possibly should give to benefit the group and those whom the group was supporting.

Similarly, there are various suggestions about how the money in the common purse was used. Augustine sees the common purse being used to distribute ‘both to the needs of his people and to others in need’ (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 62.5). As we have noted earlier, Calvin also saw the money as being used to provide for the poor.¹³⁰ This might fit with a wider provision beyond the core disciples, which John 6 may suggest. The reference in John 13.29 to the assumption by the disciples that Judas might be buying something for the feast or giving something to the poor suggests that the common purse was used at the very least for buying items for shared events such as festivals and was used to contribute to those in need. The use of the money to contribute to those in need is supported by the reference in John 12.5 to the possibility of selling the nard to give to the poor and the contribution to the needs of the disciples seems to be supported by the references in John 4.8 and 6.5.

Howard-Brook looks at Jesus’ words in John 12 and argues that in saying τοὺς πτωχοὺς γὰρ πάντοτε ἔχετε μεθ’ ἑαυτῶν (12.8), Jesus espouses a view that ‘the poor ... are to be an integral and permanent part of the discipleship community.’¹³¹ Howard-Brook contrasts Jesus’ words about the poor being ‘with’ them to the synagogue practice of collecting and then giving money or food and argues that Jesus is advocating a different approach to the poor, where they are part of the community. However beyond the use of ‘with’, Howard-Brook does not provide supporting evidence.

2.1.1.5. *The Proximity of the Common Purse to Judas*

So what does this description of the common purse suggest by way of an example to John’s readers? In order to answer this question it is important to consider whether the connection of the γλωσσόκομον to Judas indicates that this is a negative example or whether, in spite of Judas’ connection to it, it is a positive example.

¹³⁰ See §2.1.1.2.

¹³¹ Wes Howard-Brook, *Becoming Children of God*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994, 272.

On both occasions that the γλωσσόκομον is mentioned, Judas is mentioned as the keeper of the common purse, as the betrayer of Jesus, and, in John 12, as stealing from the common purse.

If we look more widely at how Judas is presented in John, we find that he is described as a 'devil' (6.70-71), as being influenced by the devil (13.2), as someone into whom Satan enters (13.27) and as the one who guides the soldiers to the garden so that they can find Jesus (18.3-5).

In John, Jesus is portrayed as being the one who knows people (1.47-48; 2.24) and thus it would seem that within John's presentation, Jesus knows both that Judas is misusing his position, and is the one who will betray him. Lincoln therefore argues that the detail of Judas keeping the common purse is a-historical and suggests that Judas would not have been 'left in charge of the money-box if it was known that he was in fact stealing from it.'¹³² However, if Lincoln were correct in his conclusion that Judas' keeping of the common purse is a-historical, we are left with a situation where John chooses to present Jesus as knowing people and their hearts, and therefore, where Jesus knows Judas and his heart and actions, and yet allows Judas to keep the common purse, while Judas is misusing it. As Haenchen notes 'the tradition is not perturbed that Jesus appointed the least suitable man, a thief, to guard the cash box.'¹³³

We might then ask the question why 'the tradition is not perturbed'; why does Jesus allow Judas to continue keeping the common purse; and why does he offer Judas the piece of bread in a way that may appear to honour him?¹³⁴ Ambrose suggests it is so that Judas is not forced into betraying Jesus 'because he was unhonoured or in want' (*Off.* 1.16.64). This would suggest that part of what we see with Judas is a situation where grace is extended to someone who is known to be abusing their position within a group. When Augustine comments on this situation, he argues by having 'one ruined man among the twelve' Jesus was teaching that 'we should tolerate the evil and not divide Christ's body' (*Tract. Ev. Jo.* 50).

It is interesting to note that Judas is not the only disciple to fail Jesus. Peter also betrays Jesus (18.7, 25, 27). Jesus predicts his betrayal (13.38) and yet similarly continues to trust Peter as a disciple (21.15-22). With both Peter and Judas, Jesus knows about their faults and yet continues to trust and extend grace to them. This

¹³² Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to St John*, London: Continuum, 2005, 338-39.

¹³³ E. Haenchen, *John*, 2 vols, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, 1:84.

¹³⁴ Lincoln, *John*, 379.

would suggest that while the common purse is always mentioned alongside Judas, this does not argue for a negative connotation to John's portrayal of the common purse. Rather, John's portrayal gives an example of continuing with communal holding and use of money for the followers of Jesus and for those in need, even when there is misuse of the system and ambiguities within it.

The argument that John is not negative about the common purse is supported by his wider presentation of his disciples and their responsibilities and identity as a group. When Jesus teaches about his disciples and followers, he uses corporate images – the vine (John 15) and the flock (John 10) – and corporate language (14.20; 16.32; 17.21). He gives responsibilities to his mother and the beloved disciple to look after one another. While there is an emphasis on individuals believing, for example, when people believe they have eternal life (3.15-16; John 20.31), which is relationship with God (17.3), eternal life is also spoken of in a more corporate and communal context, for example in the farewell discourse, which includes both the language about corporate identity and Jesus' prayer for his followers' unity (17.20-26).

2.1.1.6. Conclusions

John's portrayal of the γλωσσόκομον is not specific in its description of where the money comes from or how it was used. However John does suggest that money in the γλωσσόκομον included money from the sale of gifts given to the group and that money in the γλωσσόκομον was used, at the very least, for some common needs of the group and to give to the poor. The γλωσσόκομον was kept by Judas, who did not discharge his position honourably. John portrays Jesus as being aware of this and yet allowing it to continue. John's wider portrayal of Jesus' followers suggests mutual responsibility and communal identity, which lends support to the communal holding and use of money being positive. However, John does not give a clear prescription for how this should be done, only that in whatever way sharing between followers of Jesus and provision for the poor occurs, it is likely to include those who are taking advantage of the system and misusing it, and that this is no reason not to do it.

2.1.2. Other Indications of the Practice of Jesus and his Disciples

There are a few other passages in the gospels, which add to the picture provided by the references to the γλωσσόκομον in John's gospel and may help us interpret the practice of Jesus and his disciples. These passages cohere with the evidence of the

common purse in John's gospel and there is some evidence of their historicity. While space precludes the examination of the historicity of each text in detail, brief comments about historical evidence for the texts will be provided. After considering these passages, we look at possible parallels in the surrounding cultures.

2.1.2.1. *The Call of the Disciples*

In each of the Synoptic gospels, the calling of the disciples involves those who are called leaving things to follow Jesus (Matt 4.18–22; Mark 1.17–20; Luke 5.11, 28). This calling and leaving is generally seen as historical.¹³⁵ It is supported by multiple attestation and to an extent by double similarity as there were disciples in the Jewish context, and the presence of disciples who spent time with Jesus helps explain the growth of the early church.

This leaving and following is something that the disciples look back to: for example, Peter refers to leaving homes (Luke 18.28) or everything (Mark 10.28). In John's gospel, the leaving is less explicit and there is a greater emphasis on coming and seeing (1.39, 46; 4.29). However the following is still there and there are situations where there is an implicit leaving. For example two of John's disciples leave him and follow Jesus (1.37).

The idea of leaving and following is also found in Jesus' teaching. For example, when a young man comes and questions Jesus, Jesus instructs him to sell his possessions, give to the poor and then follow him (Mark 10.21). The parallel in Luke 18.22 has the same response to the ruler asking the question. The idea of selling and giving possessions is also part of the general teaching Jesus provides for the disciples, for example in Luke 12.33: Πωλήσατε τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ὑμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην. The idea of leaving, particularly houses, is also present: Αἱ ἀλώπεκες φωλεοὺς ἔχουσιν καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατασκηνώσεις, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνει (Matthew 8.20).

The gospels also show Jesus and his disciples travelling together: over longer distances, for example through Samaria (John 4), and more locally, for example, across the lake (Luke 8.22–26).

The picture provided by both the Synoptics and John shows some of Jesus' disciples leaving behind homes, relatives and ways of life to follow him. It is a picture that is supported by Jesus' response to individuals who ask him questions, his general teaching, and Jesus and his disciples travelling together. This leaving would

¹³⁵ Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981, 73–80; Sanders, *Historical*, 118–22.

have created a situation where the disciples were no longer connected to their usual support networks, and thus may have been the main impetus for some kind of common purse to provide for their needs. The picture in the Synoptics suggests that the disciples who travelled with Jesus left behind their property and possessions and therefore may well not have contributed to the γλωσσόκομον.

2.1.2.2. *Non-itinerant Associates*

As well as those disciples who are called by Jesus and follow him, we find a number of examples within the gospels of individuals who support Jesus and his disciples, provide hospitality to him, and in many ways take on board his teaching, but do not seem to travel around with him. Meier points out that these people do not feature in the twelve or the crowds or the wider group of disciples who follow Jesus, but they are committed and supportive.¹³⁶ With some of the non-itinerant associates there are elements of embarrassment as Jesus and his disciples are recorded as associating with lepers and tax collectors.

In both John and Luke, we find Martha, Mary and Lazarus. In Luke 10.38–42 Martha welcomes Jesus into their home and provides hospitality and Mary sits at his feet and listens to what he is saying. In John 11, they send a message to Jesus to let him know about Lazarus' illness: both have conversations with Jesus in the midst of their grief, and John notes Jesus' love for them (11.5). In John 12, Jesus visits and eats with them at their home in Bethany and Mary anoints him with nard, showing her devotion.

In Luke 19.1–10, Zacchaeus meets Jesus, hosts him and decides both to give to the poor and pay back those he has defrauded. Again there is no reason to presume that Zacchaeus subsequently joins the group travelling with Jesus, but he does both host Jesus and give away money. In Matthew 26.6, Simon the leper hosts Jesus.

Each of these people is presented as committed to Jesus, even devoted to him, supportive of him and the travelling group, but not travelling with them. Thus, while we do have a picture of a group of disciples who are called, leave [everything] and follow Jesus, we also have those with disciple-like qualities, who are not part of this group travelling with their common purse.

Capper suggests that two versions of discipleship exist in the gospels (and then continue in the early church) – an inner group who followed an ideal pattern of sharing goods in common and those who followed and gave generously, but did

¹³⁶ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 4 vols, New York: Doubleday, 2001, 3:21. Sanders sees them as a wider group of sympathisers (Sanders, *Historical*, 125–26).

not fully share in the community of goods.¹³⁷ However, he does not fully examine the way some disciples leave property behind and then seemingly return to it, which we will consider later.

2.1.2.3. *Luke 8 and the Women*

One of the groups of people who fall somewhere between the group who leave possessions and travel with Jesus and the non-following associates, is the women listed in Luke 8. Jesus is described as travelling through cities and villages accompanied by the Twelve as well as by some women. The presence of the women 'is firmly fixed in the tradition'.¹³⁸ Thus Sanders sees their presence as historically probable.¹³⁹

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and others, are shown as travelling with Jesus, but still having access to their own resources.¹⁴⁰ Thus they do not fit into the group who give up and leave things to follow Jesus. However, while they provide from their resources, they are presented, together with the Twelve, as travelling with Jesus.¹⁴¹ This is the main passage in the gospels that points to a possible source of the money in the common purse. The sharing that is presented is one-way – the women provide the resources (Chrysostom *Hom. Jo.* 72) – and participative – the women are shown as travelling with the group for whom they are providing. The Twelve are not shown as contributing to this provision, which may well fit with the accounts of them leaving everything in order to follow.

2.1.2.4. *The Sending Out of the Twelve and the Seventy-two*

The other place in the gospels where a source of provision is shown is in the sending out of the Twelve and the subsequent sending out of the Seventy-two.¹⁴² While noting questions about the historicity of the actions of the disciples once sent

¹³⁷ Brian Capper, 'Review Article Two Types of Discipleship in Early Christianity,' *JTS* n.s. 52 (2001) 105–23, citing 108.

¹³⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, 315.

¹³⁹ Sanders, *Historical*, 109.

¹⁴⁰ Hengel notes although they are part of the group, the women do not have an obligation to leave their possessions (Hengel, *Leader*, 74).

¹⁴¹ Marshall, *Luke*, 317; R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women. Studies of Named Women in the Gospels*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, 112.

¹⁴² Textual variation indicates either Seventy or Seventy-two with evidence evenly divided, however Kurt Aland notes that the widespread concept of Seventy argues for Seventy-two being normalised to Seventy (Metzger and Aland in Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd edn, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994, 126–27). As the decision between the two makes no difference to the argument, we shall refer to Seventy-two.

out, Hengel argues that the sending out is historically probable.¹⁴³ The Synoptic accounts all presume the disciples will be provided for by those whom they visit. In Matthew 10, Jesus sends out the Twelve, instructing them to take no money or bag, ἄξιος γὰρ ὁ ἐργάτης τῆς τροφῆς αὐτοῦ (Matt 10.10). In Mark, Jesus specifies that they should not take any bread (Mark 6.8). In Luke's account, Jesus precludes carrying both bread and bag (Luke 9.3). Similarly in Luke 10, when the Seventy-two are sent out, Jesus specifies no purse or bag (Luke 10.4) and also indicates ἄξιος γὰρ ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ (Luke 10.7). In these examples, those who provide are those who are preached to, who welcome the disciples, and who are people of peace (Luke 10.5-8). However, the expectation seems to be the provision of food, drink and accommodation, not the provision of money. In Matthew, there is a specific reference to giving without payment (Matt 10.8), and in Luke 10, reference to being provided with food and eating where they stay (Luke 10.7-8).¹⁴⁴

Those who give and provide support in this instance are shown as being people of peace, but not necessarily those who know, follow or support Jesus. They are thus different from both the non-following associates and the women in Luke 8, who have an existing commitment to Jesus before they provide for him and his followers. However the picture of the sending out of the Twelve and the Seventy-two continues the picture of the following disciples as those who have left things to follow Jesus, though presumably they must have still had some of the items Jesus instructs them to leave behind.

2.1.2.5. *The Disciple Jesus Loved and Mary, and the Disciples after the Crucifixion*

It is often at the point of testing or change, that the nature of relationships between people is seen. The crucifixion and resurrection narratives provide further evidence of the relationships between Jesus and his followers. Both have elements of embarrassment in them, for example Peter's betrayal and restitution (Matt 26.69-75; Luke 22.54-62; John 21.15-23). While the crucifixion itself is seen as historical, discerning the historicity of the elements of the texts we shall examine below is harder. However they do cohere with the overall picture from John and the other passages we have considered. Even if not historical, they point to the importance of

¹⁴³ Hengel, *Leader*, 73-80.

¹⁴⁴ This practice of receiving food, but not money is one that continues in the Didache, where limits are placed on the length of time a prophet or apostle can stay and 'And when an Apostle goes forth let him accept nothing but bread till he reach his night's lodging; but if he ask for money, he is a false prophet' (11.6).

the relationships between the early followers and the perception that it was appropriate for these followers to share in various ways.

Jesus shows care for his mother and the disciple whom he loved and asks them to behave as family to one another (19.26–27). The disciple Jesus loved takes Jesus' mother into his home (19.27). In contrast to the early call stories in the Synoptics, he has a home, to which he can take her.

In Matt 28 and John 21, groups of disciples are still gathering together and travelling together. In Matt 28.16, after the crucifixion and the resurrection appearances, the eleven disciples travel together to Galilee. This suggests some level of continuity in terms of relationship and provision of support, although it may be that they used up during this period the money that was in the common purse.

John 21 provides a slightly different picture as we find a number of the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias fishing together. They may have had any number of motivating factors. They may have returned to a familiar task in the midst of their grief, turmoil and confusion. They may have used up the common purse and no longer have found those who would contribute after Jesus' death. However, whatever the motivation, John 21 provides a picture of a group of disciples still being together. It is interestingly a group that includes some of the Twelve, as well as others such as Nathanael (21.2), who does not feature in any list of the Twelve. Also while we have noted that in the Synoptics, the disciples leave their boats, yet now they have access to a boat, so they may have returned to that which they had left. These examples fit with the overall picture of a group travelling together and of disciples who left their property behind as opposed to selling it.

2.1.2.6. Summary of the Other Indications of the Practice of Jesus and his Disciples

The passages in the gospels that indicate the practice of Jesus and his disciples show a variety of ways that people followed and participated in the group that surrounded Jesus. There are those who are called and leave behind homes, ways of life and family. There are those who travel with Jesus and the disciples and provide support out of their own resources and thus seem not to have left their resources behind. There are also those who do not travel with Jesus and the disciples, yet are committed, supportive and provide hospitality.

There are hints at how Jesus and his disciples were provided for. The way in which non-following associates such as Martha, Mary, Zacchaeus and Simon provided food as well as the provision from people of peace on specific mission

trips, would have limited what the common purse would have been needed for. Luke 8.1–3 also suggests a possible source for money or gifts for the common purse.

2.1.3. Summary of the Practice of Jesus and his Disciples

Looking at the John passages about the γλωσσόκομον in the light of the other indications of the practice of Jesus and his disciples, we see that the γλωσσόκομον was one of a variety of ways that Jesus and his followers / supporters related to one another with their possessions, part of a network of relationships and means of support. It appears that the γλωσσόκομον was specific to those followers who travelled with Jesus. The call passages in the Synoptics with their emphasis on the disciples leaving everything, and the passages about Jesus and the disciples travelling may provide the motivation for the γλωσσόκομον, as they would have lost their existing means of support. They also suggest that these disciples, who have left everything, are less likely to have had things to contribute to the γλωσσόκομον.

However, it appears that there were also those who travelled with the group, who had not left everything and who contributed from their own resources to support the group. The women in Luke 8 may be contributing to the γλωσσόκομον. This is supported by Judas' words about the nard, where he indicates an expectation that Mary could have given the nard to be sold, which suggests that similar gifts had been received and sold in the past.

Thus it seems possible that not only had some of those who were supported by γλωσσόκομον contributed to it, but that there were others who received support, but had not contributed to it.

The money in the γλωσσόκομον seems to have been used for buying food (for the feast), providing for the poor and, if we assume that the women in Luke 8 contribute to it, for more general support. The money in the γλωσσόκομον seems to have been held in common and cared for by Judas. It was not, however, the only way that Jesus' supporters and followers held or used possessions, as there were those who retained at least some of their possessions and hosted Jesus and the disciples who travelled with him. Even for those who were part of the group who travelled with Jesus, it was not their only source of support, sharing or provision. While the γλωσσόκομον seems to have been provision specifically for those who travelled with Jesus, and while it is always presented alongside Judas' misuse of the funds, John's wider portrayal of Jesus' followers suggests mutual responsibility and communal identity which lends support to the communal holding and use of money as being a positive thing. John's account of Judas' role suggests that those

who follow such an example of sharing may find that there will be those who abuse it. This is not however a reason to stop such sharing.

2.2. Possible Parallels

2.2.1. *Rabbis and their Disciples*

There are a number of references in the gospels where individuals call Jesus ῥαββί (for example, Matt 26.25, 49; Mark 9.5, 11.21; John 1.39, 49). So in some sense, Jesus is seen in the gospels as a rabbi with disciples, alongside John and his disciples and the Pharisees and their disciples (Mark 2.18). Therefore our first comparator for the practice of Jesus and his disciples is the practice of contemporaneous rabbis and their disciples. We consider what evidence exists for first century rabbis and disciples and examine the evidence that hints at practice related to possessions and discipleship. We then look at the similarities and differences between what we know of first century rabbis and their disciples and what we know of the practice of Jesus and his disciples.

2.2.1.1. *Evidence about Rabbis and their Disciples*

2.2.1.1.1. *Issues Surrounding the Evidence*

While there are a number of sources of evidence about rabbis and their disciples including Josephus, the NT, Philo, Sirach, the Mishnah and the Talmud, there are issues with using some of this evidence. First is the question of dating the material: much of the rabbinical material in the Mishnah and Talmud is codified well after the first century. Thus the evidence may well refer to a considerably different post-70 CE context. As David Instone-Brewer points out, the status and situation of rabbis in the post-70 CE era was different from that in pre-70 CE Judaism.¹⁴⁵ Post-70 CE rabbis began to be ordained, there was a reduction in the diversity of Jewish groups and Judaism as a whole had to respond to the lack of a temple for liturgical worship. Therefore there was ‘an increasing emphasis on study and prayer’.¹⁴⁶ Thus after 70 CE there is a time of transition in terminology. For example, the term ‘scribe’ which had referred to a learned man came to be used more generally

¹⁴⁵ David Instone-Brewer, ‘Review Article: The Use of Rabbinic Sources in Gospel Studies,’ *TynBul* 50.2 (1999) 281–298, citing 282.

¹⁴⁶ Instone-Brewer, ‘Review’, 282.

including referring to a copyist,¹⁴⁷ and ‘rabbi’ which had been used honorifically became ‘reserved exclusively for scribes.’¹⁴⁸

However it is possible to estimate the dating of some of the sayings within the rabbinic material by considering the rabbis named in conjunction with particular sayings. While this is not a guaranteed method, it at least gives some indication of dating. Similarly, sayings attributed to a later period may include earlier traditions or practices. Types of exegesis, logical precedence, particular temple references and parallel sources may be used to estimate dates.¹⁴⁹

Second is the issue of the location to which the evidence refers. Dunn points out that ‘with the Apocrypha several of the items come from the diaspora’.¹⁵⁰ Thus it might be questioned how relevant such information is to the situation of rabbis and their disciples in Palestine.

With these limitations in mind, we now turn to consider what may be found in this evidence.

2.2.1.1.2. *Schools and Payment*

There is evidence of paying fees¹⁵¹ to study the Bible and Mishnah (*Num. Rab.* 14.2) and to schools (*Sir* 51.23; *b. Yom* 35b). Many of these references are later than the first half of the first century or are late texts referring to the first century.¹⁵² Moore argues that the second century practice was ‘more universal and regular’¹⁵³ but that similar practices existed in the first century. If such practice did exist at the time of Jesus, it presents a very different picture of the relationship between teacher and disciple and of methods of learning.

2.2.1.1.3. *How to find Disciples / become a Disciple*

Meier argues that usually a disciple would seek out a master and not vice versa.¹⁵⁴ This is supported by *Sirach* 6.34–6: ‘Stand in the company of the elders. Who is wise? Attach yourself to such a one.’ While there are questions about accuracy and motivations, Josephus’ account of his exploration of the sects and time with Bannus

¹⁴⁷ David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, London: Athlone Press, 1956, 211.

¹⁴⁸ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, London: SCM, 1969, 236.

¹⁴⁹ David Instone-Brewer, *Prayer and Agriculture*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004, 28–38.

¹⁵⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, 273.

¹⁵¹ Philo refers to fees for learning (*Congr.* 127), but not to whether these are for rabbinic teachers.

¹⁵² E. Schürer, G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Black, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979, 2:329.

¹⁵³ George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era. The Age of the Tannaim* 3vols, Cambridge (Mass): Harvard University Press, 1944, 1:321.

¹⁵⁴ Meier, *Jew*, 3:53.

indicates that Josephus as the disciple was the one who chose to investigate and chose with whom he would spend time (*Life* 2.7–12). This taking of initiative also seems to happen with two of John’s disciples when they follow Jesus to find out more about him (1.37).

2.2.1.1.4. *The Relationship between Rabbi and Disciples*

Once the relationship of rabbi and disciple was established, the disciple would spend time with the rabbi, learning through watching. There are several accounts of disciples learning from their rabbis by observation. Ben ‘Azzai talks about following R. ‘Aqiba to the toilet and thus learning (*b. Ber.* 62a). R. Ḥiyya b. Abba speaks about watching R. Joḥanan eating and blessing the food (*b. Ber.* 38b) and Rab Hammuna reports how he learnt about the location of Tefillin by observation (*b. Ber.* 24a). The second two instances involve rabbis in the third and early fourth century, the first example involves rabbis in the early second century. While there will have been changes in the post-70 CE era, we might expect that such observation for learning was built upon previous practice. This claim is supported by Sir 6.35, which indicates that the disciple should visit and wear out the doorstep of the intelligent person from whom he wants to learn.

The disciple also would be expected to honour and provide services to the rabbi. ‘R. Joshua b. Levi ruled: All manner of service that a slave must render to his master a student must render to his teacher, except that of taking off his shoe’ (*b. Ket.* 96a). Similarly in *m. ‘Abot* 6.3 the same rabbi teaches ‘those a person learns from should be honoured’. Both of these are from the early third century, but do fit with John the Baptist’s words to Jesus: ‘after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry’ (Matt 2.11). This respect for the rabbi or teacher is also found in the Kerithoth tractate of the Mishnah:

And so it is also with the study of the Law; if the son has been worthy [to sit] before the teacher, the teacher comes before the father in all places, because both a man and his father are bound to honour the teacher (*m. Ker.* 6.9).

2.2.1.1.5. *The Example of Bannus and Josephus*

One example of a disciple from the same period as Jesus and his disciples is Josephus’ account of being a disciple of Bannus. Josephus writes of how he wanted ‘to gain personal experience of the several sects into which our nation is divided’ (*Life* 2.9–10), which he sees as including the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. He reports that he tried out all three and then heard of Bannus, who lived in the wilderness and went to be his disciple for three years (*Life* 2.11). Josephus’ account does not seem

to hold together. Josephus' claim to have tested the various ways would have involved many years and yet Josephus reports that it all happened between the ages of 16 and 19, including the three years he spent with Bannus.¹⁵⁵ Josephus is also writing post 70 CE and in a situation of having Roman patronage, which probably colours his writing. However there does not seem to be any particular reason for him to invent other information about his time with Bannus.

Josephus' account of his discipleship with Bannus shows him as choosing to associate with Bannus as opposed to Bannus calling him. It shows simplicity of lifestyle, depending on food and clothing that occurred naturally (*Life* 2.11).¹⁵⁶ It is also time limited and Josephus reports, 'With him I lived for three years and, having accomplished my purpose, returned to the city' (*Life* 2.12). Josephus does not elucidate what this purpose was beyond exploring the various sects, but he does go on to conclude that he then began 'to govern my life by the rules of the Pharisees' (*Life* 2.12).

2.2.1.2. *Jesus, his Disciples and the Pharisees / Rabbis – Similarities*

There are two main areas of similarity between references to rabbis and their disciples and Jesus and his disciples in terms of their relationships to one another and money: simplicity of life and precedence over family.

The Pharisees were contemporaneous with Jesus and his disciples and as we have noted earlier, at least some had disciples. The simplicity of life that Josephus ascribes to the Pharisees both in *Ant.* 18.12 as well as in his account of how he subjected himself to the various sects in *Life*, is similar to that found in the gospels. When Jesus sends out the Twelve and the Seventy-two, he tells them to take nothing with them in the way of provision.¹⁵⁷ When Jesus talks to prospective disciples, he warns them about the simplicity of lifestyle and hardship that they will encounter (Luke 9.57-62). It is however important to acknowledge the limits of our information about the Pharisees. Dunn points out the challenges of deciding which evidence to use and notes that some evidence has been preserved by Christians.¹⁵⁸ He concludes 'As we have learned more about Second Temple

¹⁵⁵ Meier, *Jew*, 3:304.

¹⁵⁶ This fits with simplicity and hardship noted in the later account in m. 'Abot 6.4: 'Thou shalt eat bread with salt and thou shalt drink water by measure, and on the ground shalt thou sleep and thou shalt live a life of trouble the while thou toilest in the Law.'

¹⁵⁷ See §2.1.2.4

¹⁵⁸ Dunn, *Jesus*, 256.

Judaism, the more it has become apparent that we know less about the Pharisees than we previously took for granted.¹⁵⁹

The precedence of the relationship between disciple and rabbi / teacher noted above is paralleled in Jesus' teaching.¹⁶⁰ For example, Jesus says, 'Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me' (Matt 10.37).

2.2.1.3. *Jesus, his Disciples and the Pharisees / Rabbis – Differences*

However, despite these similarities and other similarities in teaching, there are considerable differences even in the limited evidence that we have.

The accounts we have of being disciples of a rabbi suggest that it was for a limited period, thus Josephus can conclude after three years with Bannus that he had accomplished his purpose (*Life* 2.12) and can write of having 'passed through the three courses' (*Life* 2.11) of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. In contrast Jesus calls his disciples to follow him without any obvious time limit. Manson considers Luke 14.26 and its parallel in Matthew 10.37. Looking at the difference of μαθητής and ἄξιος, he argues that the Aramaic word behind them is more likely to be שוליא rather than אדימלת,¹⁶¹ giving a picture of discipleship more akin to 'apprenticeship to the work of the kingdom'¹⁶² as opposed to completing specific learning of law. He argues 'Their work was not study but practice.'¹⁶³

The accounts also suggest that disciples found and chose the rabbi they wished to follow, as opposed to most of the accounts about Jesus, where he usually chooses and calls his disciples.

While we have shown evidence of disciples spending time with their rabbis and observing in detail the practice of the rabbis, the picture is one of the rabbis living in one place and the disciples travelling daily to see them. This contrasts with the picture of Jesus with at least some of his disciples travelling from place to place without a fixed abode. This fits with the contrast between Jesus' disciples who are called to leave their homes, families, ways of life and follow and the rabbis' disciples who are exhorted to work as well as study the law (*m. 'Abot* 2.2; *b. Yom* 35b). We have noted the existence of non-following associates and it may be that there are more similarities between their situation and that of the rabbis and their disciples.

¹⁵⁹ Dunn, *Jesus*, 267.

¹⁶⁰ See §2.2.1.1.4

¹⁶¹ T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931, 238.

¹⁶² Manson, *Teaching*, 240.

¹⁶³ Manson, *Teaching*, 239.

When we look at the relationship between rabbis, their disciples and their possessions, the main evidence we have, albeit late, is of disciples paying for learning in some way. There is no record of shared possessions or money, or of them travelling together. While there is evidence that the honour due to teachers is above family, this is not specified in terms of support or provision and even if it were, it would not provide a parallel to the situation of Jesus and his disciples sharing out of a common purse. In fact Hellerman concludes that the common purse 'moves beyond anything we find operating among the early Israelites or Second Temple Judeans',¹⁶⁴ with the exceptions of David and his followers in 1 Sam 21-30 and the community at Qumran.¹⁶⁵ It is to the community at Qumran and the Essenes that we now turn, to examine whether they provide a helpful parallel to the practice of Jesus and his disciples.

2.2.2. Essenes and Qumran

2.2.2.1. Evidence

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) point to the community at Qumran practising some degree of sharing of possessions. Josephus and Philo provide similar evidence about the Essenes. We will consider the evidence relating to the Qumran community and the secondary evidence relating to the Essenes and then consider the relationship between them.

2.2.2.1.1. The Relationship between Khirbet Qumran and the Scrolls

While there are a number of proposed reconstructions of the site at Qumran including as a military site, a recreational villa, a commercial site and a fortified manor, each proposal, except the one linking the site to the community who wrote the scrolls, has significant counter arguments. The walls of the site are not reinforced and the graves do not show signs of injuries incurred in battle, therefore it seems unlikely the site was a military one.¹⁶⁶ The quantities of fineware are small, there is a lack of commercial items and the site is not on a trade route, so it seems unlikely that it was a commercial site.¹⁶⁷ Catherine Murphy examines a number of

¹⁶⁴ Joseph H. Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001, 71.

¹⁶⁵ Hellerman, *Church*, 71.

¹⁶⁶ Catherine Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Qumran Community*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, 350.

¹⁶⁷ Murphy, *Wealth*, 354.

theories and concludes that ‘The weight of the evidence, therefore points to the identification of the Qumran site as a sectarian community centre.’¹⁶⁸

In addition, evidence links the community to the scrolls found at and near the site. Some scroll caves are within the enclosure wall and the majority of scrolls were found in caves where ‘access to these caves required passage through or alongside the compound.’¹⁶⁹ There is similar pottery in the caves and settlement,¹⁷⁰ including cylindrical jars.¹⁷¹ The archaeological evidence points to the buildings and the scrolls having similar dates.¹⁷² This would seem to indicate that the scrolls are from the community at Khirbet Qumran.

There are also a number of physical indications that link the community at Khirbet Qumran with the scrolls. At the site, there are a large number of cisterns which could be baths for the ritual washings advocated by the scrolls.¹⁷³ Coins were ‘found in the community buildings but not in living quarters’,¹⁷⁴ and ‘the number of coins found suggest a simple lifestyle,’¹⁷⁵ which correlates with the sharing of money reported in the scrolls.

While various reconstructions of the Qumran site have been proposed, and while some scholars have raised questions of whether the scrolls are related to the community that inhabited the site, the scholarly consensus provides significant evidence supporting the proposal that the scrolls were written, or at least copied, by the community living at Qumran, which was a sectarian community. For the purposes of this thesis we will therefore assume such a link and will now turn to consider what the DSS say about the sharing of possessions.

2.2.2.1.2. *Evidence of Sharing Possessions*

The DSS point to two kinds of sharing of possessions. In 1QS we find a situation where the community eats together (1QS 6.1–4), and where entry to the community is staged. A man who wishes to join the community is first ‘examined by the Guardian at the head of the Congregation concerning his understanding and his deeds’ (1QS 6.14). Then if he is accepted, there is a probationary year, where

¹⁶⁸ Murphy, *Wealth*, 358.

¹⁶⁹ Murphy, *Wealth*, 295.

¹⁷⁰ Kenneth and Jodi Magness Atkinson, ‘Josephus's Essenes and the Qumran Community,’ *JBL* 129 (2010) 317–342, citing 324–25.

¹⁷¹ Murphy, *Wealth*, 295.

¹⁷² Todd Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes*, Cambridge: CUP, 1988, 4.

¹⁷³ Magen Broshi, ‘Essenes at Qumran? A Rejoinder to Albert Baumgarten,’ *DSD* 14 (2007) 25–33, citing 28.

¹⁷⁴ Beall, *Josephus*, 4.

¹⁷⁵ Murphy, *Wealth*, 316–17.

‘he shall not touch the pure Meal of the Congregation’, ‘nor shall he have any share of the property of the Congregation’ (1QS 6.16–17). After this year, he is then examined again and if he is accepted ‘his property and earnings shall be handed over to the Bursar of the Congregation who shall register it to his account and shall not spend it for the Congregation’ (1QS 6.19–20). During this second year, he is not able to partake in the drink of the Congregation and at the end of it is examined again and if he is accepted ‘his property shall be merged and he shall offer his counsel and judgement to the Community’ (1QS 6.23–24). 1QS also indicates a variety of punishments and penances for those who transgress the rule of the community, including those who fail to care for the property of the community. Those who cause loss to the property are expected to ‘restore it in full. And if he be unable to restore it, he shall do penance for sixty days’ (1QS 7.6–8). If someone lies in a matter of property he shall do ‘penance with respect to one quarter of his food’ (1QS 6.25). This raises the question of how an individual could restore property, if each member of the community had handed over all his property to the community. Murphy suggests the possibility of restitution ‘may mean that they retained some of their own property or that their work could generate the income necessary to compensate for a loss.’¹⁷⁶

The *Damascus Document* provides a different picture. In it there are rules about keeping away from uncleanness and living in community (CD 7.1–5 and 6.15–20), where in order to be part of the congregation, the Guardian needs to approve the person’s admittance. However, there is provision for those who are married (CD 7.6–9). The instructions for possessions are lighter:

They shall place the earnings of at least two days out of every month into the hands of the Guardian and the Judges, and from it they shall give to the fatherless, and from it they shall succour the poor and the needy, the aged sick and the homeless, the captive taken by a foreign people, the virgin with no near kin, and the ma[*id* for] whom no man cares (CD 14.13–18).

So while there are limits and common decisions on business transactions (CD 13.13–16), there does not seem to be the same kind of handing over of all possessions as in 1QS, although it would be possible for possessions to be handed over and then for a proportion of earnings to be handed over. As with 1QS, *Damascus Document* includes provision of punishment for those who transgress, including expulsion from the community (CD B2.2–5) and exclusion from the pure Meal (CD 9.20–25). This suggests that there is some kind of common meal within

¹⁷⁶ Murphy, *Wealth*, 158.

the community described by CD. However, it is not clear where this provision comes from and whether other possessions or earnings are handed into a common pot as in 1QS. While the two documents could be describing the community at Qumran, this appears less likely as CD has a number of references that only make sense in the case of a community that is in the vicinity of a town, for example the instructions on individuals doing business or interacting with those outside the community (CD 13.13–16) and the reference that ‘No man shall walk abroad to do business on the Sabbath. He shall not walk more than one thousand cubits beyond his town’ (CD 10.20). This indicates that the writer is anticipating communities in different towns. CD 9.10–13 provides the procedure for ‘When anything is lost, and it is not known who has stolen it from the property of the camp in which it was stolen, its owner shall pronounce a curse’. This indicates both communal property but also individual ownership at one and the same time. Thus Murphy argues for a situation where property is both individual and communal. It has been handed over, however ‘there are still individual owners who may have their property stolen, it is the entire community that is deprived of the property’s use.’¹⁷⁷ This could fit together with Capper’s suggestion that the instructions on giving two days of a month’s salary are for those who had not become part of the community of goods in a town, but who supported the Essene community and contributed to their fund for giving to the poor.¹⁷⁸ This might make sense of the way that Josephus and Philo both point to a community of goods amongst the Essenes that is more comprehensive than that suggested by CD and more akin to that described in 1QS.

Murphy notes that 4Q348 documents a transaction and is predominately names, which could be ‘a significant witness to the practice of shared property’.¹⁷⁹

Josephus’ description of the Essenes has similarities to both 1QS and CD. Josephus briefly mentions the Essenes in *Life* 2.10 and indicates that he spent time with them. However as indicated earlier, Josephus’ account leaves questions as to whether the three years allowed time for him to investigate all three sects and spend time with Bannus. In the *Jewish War*, Josephus provides a fuller description of the Essene way of life. He reports that they have community of goods and that new members hand over their property to the sect (*J.W.* 2.122). He also says ‘They occupy no one city, but settle in large numbers in every town’ (*J.W.* 2.124–25). Thus when they travel from place to place they are able to stay with other Essenes

¹⁷⁷ Murphy, *Wealth*, 49.

¹⁷⁸ Capper, ‘Types,’ 114.

¹⁷⁹ Murphy, *Wealth*, 397.

and ‘all the resources of the community are put at their disposal, just as if they were their own; and they enter the houses of men whom they have never seen before as though they were the most intimate friends’ (*J.W.* 2.124–25). While Josephus reports that the Essenes disdain marriage (*J.W.* 2.120), he indicates that there are some Essenes who allow wives (*J.W.* 2.160–61) and that the Essenes ‘adopt other men’s children’ (*J.W.* 2.120). When Josephus mentions the Essenes in *Antiquities*, he again speaks of how ‘they hold their possessions in common, and the wealthy man receives no more enjoyment from his property than the man who possesses nothing’ (*Ant.* 18.20).

Like Josephus, Philo also writes of how there were many Essenes (over 4000) in various villages (*Good Person* 75; *Hypoth.* 11.1). Philo reports that they labour on the land and produce crafts, have a sense of equality and share possessions, including houses, wages and meals (*Good Person* 85–86). In *Hypothetica* Philo reports how the wages once handed over are kept by the treasurer who is responsible for buying food ‘and anything else which human life requires’ (*Hypoth.* 11.10).

2.2.2.1.3. *The Relationship between the Qumran Community and the Essenes*

Before we turn to considering the relationship between the Qumran community and Essenes, and Jesus and his disciples, we first need to consider the relationship between the Qumran community and the Essenes and whether we need to consider them as separate groups, or whether we can use the evidence of the DSS alongside the evidence from Josephus and Philo. For the most part there is consensus amongst scholars that the community living at Khirbet Qumran were Essenes.¹⁸⁰

In addition to the evidence for a link between the community at Qumran and the Essenes, the following points provide further support. First, there is diversity within the DSS and within Josephus’ description of the Essenes as well as between the different descriptions. Such diversity within Jewish groups was not unusual with both Hillel and Shammai belonging to the Pharisees.¹⁸¹ Secondly, the communities may have developed their practice and theology over time.¹⁸² The

¹⁸⁰ Beall, *Josephus*, 124–29; James C. Vanderkam, ‘The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essenes or Sadducees?’, in Hershel Shanks, ed. *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London: SPCK, 1993, 50–62, 50. (Contra Albert Baumgarten, ‘Who Cares and Why Does It Matter? Qumran and the Essenes, Once Again!’, *DSD* 11 (2004) 174–190). For further details of the arguments supporting this consensus see Appendix 1.

¹⁸¹ Broshi, ‘Essenes,’ 26.

¹⁸² Geza Vermes and Martin D. Goodman ed. *The Essenes According to the Classical Sources*, Sheffield: JSOT, 1989, 13.

DSS were composed pre-31 BCE. Philo and Josephus are describing the first century CE practice, which may be different.¹⁸³ Thirdly, practice may have varied between Qumran and other communities. Schiffman suggests that Qumran was the only place where the third stage of entry into the community was possible.¹⁸⁴

Fourthly, the Qumran community also appears to have been part of a larger group, both by the number of scrolls copied as well as the way that the public rooms are larger, suggesting visitors to the site for festivals.¹⁸⁵ The presence of similar graves in Jerusalem adds to this evidence.¹⁸⁶

Fifthly, if the two groups are not related, then we have a situation where two similar communities existed, one of which left archaeological remains and scrolls, but no accounts or descriptions from outsiders and the other was written about by outsiders, but left no other traces found as yet.¹⁸⁷ This seems unlikely. Therefore, given the similarities between the Essenes described by Philo, Josephus and Pliny and the evidence about the community at Qumran in the DSS and the archaeological evidence, it seems probable that the community at Khirbet Qumran was part of a wider group, referred to by Philo, Josephus and Pliny as Essenes. We will therefore use evidence from the DSS, Khirbet Qumran, Philo and Josephus together when we look at comparing the Essenes to Jesus and his disciples and then to the early church.

2.2.2.2. *Links and Relationship to Jesus and his Disciples*

We have considered the evidence about the Essenes and Qumran. We now look at whether Jesus and his disciples would have known about or related to them. The knowledge that both Philo and Josephus display about the Essenes and their description of their numbers and the variety of towns or villages that they lived in, suggests that Jesus and his disciples would probably have come across the Essenes in their travels, or at least known about them.¹⁸⁸

Capper goes further to posit a relationship between Jesus and his disciples and the Essenes. He argues that the beloved disciple in John was ‘not one of the twelve,

¹⁸³ Atkinson, ‘Josephus,’ 340.

¹⁸⁴ Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Philadelphia and Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1994, 101.

¹⁸⁵ Murphy, *Wealth*, 103.

¹⁸⁶ Joseph E. Zias, ‘The Cemeteries of Qumran and Celibacy: Confusion Laid to Rest?’, *DSD* 7 (2000) 220–253, citing 243.

¹⁸⁷ Frank Moore Cross, ‘The Early History of the Qumran Community,’ in David Noel Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield, eds, *New Directions in Biblical Archeology*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1969, 68–69.

¹⁸⁸ Capper, ‘Types,’ 113.

... but a Jerusalem disciple',¹⁸⁹ who hosts Jesus in Jerusalem in the lead up to Jesus' arrest.¹⁹⁰ Capper argues that the person hosting Jesus at such a key point would need to be someone known to him and that Jesus' instructions about following the man carrying water, suggest that Jesus was acquainted with the household.¹⁹¹

Capper then uses the location of the Upper Room and archaeological evidence about baths referred to in the Temple Scroll to argue that the Upper Room was located in the same quarter as the Essenes in Jerusalem.¹⁹² Riesner similarly argues from archaeological and literary evidence that both the Upper Room and the Essene Quarter were in the SW quarter of Jerusalem.¹⁹³ Capper suggests that the reference to a man carrying water needed to be specific enough for the disciples to recognise the person to follow, but usual enough for those in the area so that it did not draw too much attention to them.¹⁹⁴ He thus argues that the household where Jesus ate with his disciples was one where there were no women and that this might well suggest it was an Essene household.¹⁹⁵

Capper's argument rests on a number of conjectures which are difficult to prove or disprove: that the beloved disciple was not one of the twelve, that the beloved disciple lived in Jerusalem and hosted Jesus there before Jesus died, that Jesus was hosted by someone who lived at the Upper Room (as opposed to an arrangement having been made to use it) and that the man carrying the water was an Essene, to name but a few. Therefore while his conclusions may be correct, they do not seem to be compelling. However, his investigation of the location of the Upper Room, the *Bethso* and the Essene quarter do suggest that it is likely that Jesus and his disciples were at the very least aware of the Essenes, if not acquainted with them, or in relationship with them. The times when Jesus appears to refer to or speak in contrast to some Essene teaching, for example about animals in pits on the Sabbath (CD 11.13-14; Matt 12.11),¹⁹⁶ may also support this.

¹⁸⁹ B. Capper, "'With the Oldest Monks..." Light from Essene History on the Career of the Beloved Disciple,' *JTS* n.s. 49 (1998) 1-55, citing 3.

¹⁹⁰ Capper, 'Monks,' 14.

¹⁹¹ Capper, 'Monks,' 17.

¹⁹² Capper, 'Monks,' 21-26, 36-42.

¹⁹³ Rainer Riesner, 'Jesus, the Primitive Community, and the Essene Quarter of Jerusalem,' in James H. Charlesworth, ed. *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York: Doubleday, 1992, 198-234, citing 202-14.

¹⁹⁴ Capper, 'Monks,' 51-52.

¹⁹⁵ Capper, 'Monks,' 52-53.

¹⁹⁶ James H. Charlesworth, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Discovery and Challenge to Biblical Studies,' in James H. Charlesworth, ed. *Scripture and Scrolls*, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006, 1-24, citing 20-21.

2.2.2.3. Similarities

There are a number of similarities between what is described of the Qumran and Essene communities and what is known of the practice of Jesus and his disciples. First there is the holding in common of at least some possessions and wages. Secondly, Philo points to money being held by a treasurer and in John's gospel, Judas is referred to as the person who kept the common purse. This treasurer is responsible for buying food and providing in other ways and in John's gospel, we find the assumption when Judas departs that he is going to get something for the feast or give something to the poor (13.29). Thirdly, there are references to the Essenes / Qumran communities eating together and we find Jesus and his disciples eating together as well as being hosted by others (4.8; 12.2; 13.2). Fourthly, CD refers to giving to those in need and each time the common purse is referred to we find reference to giving to the poor (12.5, 13.29). Fifthly, there does appear to be some diversity in practice and way of life for those who are Essenes, particularly between those at Qumran and those in towns. This diversity in discipleship / membership is also seen with Jesus and his disciples: those who travel with him, those who support and travel with, those who host. Sixthly, there is an element of similarity between the way Essenes were able to travel and be hosted by other Essenes and the way that Jesus and his disciples were hosted by non-following associates. This is part of a wider focus on community in both groups.

2.2.2.4. Differences

However, despite these similarities, there are a number of differences. First, there is a very different way of becoming a disciple or member of the community. Jesus generally calls individuals or in a few cases invites them to come and see, while with the Essenes / Qumran, there is a more structured and graduated entry with several stages of examination and teaching (1QS 3.13–15, 1QS 6.13–24).

Secondly, there is a difference in what happens to possessions on joining. In many instances when Jesus calls, his disciples leave their possessions or way of life behind, while with the Essenes and Qumran, they hand over their property to the group.

Thirdly, while Josephus describes the welcome that Essenes receive when they travel, they are presented as static communities who happen to travel, while the practice of Jesus and his disciples with the common purse seems to be one where the common purse was for those who travelled with him.

Fourthly, we see a difference in eating habits. With the Qumran and Essenes there are specific rules about whom one may eat with, about staged entry to eating and drinking and about not eating with those outside (1QS 6.17, 20–1), while Jesus and his disciples eat with those others considered sinners or unrighteous (Matt 9.10).

Fifthly, there is a difference in dealing with those who err. As noted earlier, John presents Jesus as one who knows and therefore presumably knows that Judas is misusing his position, and yet allows Judas to continue as one of the twelve and in that position. In contrast there are strict penalties in the instruction in CD and 1QS. In CD if someone errs in a matter of property they are to be excluded from the pure meal (CD 9.20–4), while in 1QS we find that the person must restore the property and if he is unable to do so, he must do sixty days' penance (1QS 7.6–8).

2.2.2.5. *Conclusions*

So what can we learn about the practice of Jesus and his disciples by comparing it with that of the Essenes? We have argued that Jesus and his disciples were aware of the Essenes, if not relating to Essenes. Therefore when Jesus and his disciples had the common purse, we may assume that they were aware of different ways of approaching sharing possessions. They may have picked up the similarities from the Essenes or they may have formed them themselves, but they presumably to some degree chose their differences. Some of the differences we see between the two groups are due to circumstance – the size, age and development¹⁹⁷ of the two groups and also the travelling versus static nature of the groups.

However, other differences do not appear to be directly related to the group circumstances: the welcome to become disciples (either by call or invitation) without a staged entry process, an openness to the world beyond the community, evidenced by the way that Jesus and his disciples ate with others and the continued inclusion of Judas in spite of his misuse of the funds in the common purse. Thus in comparison with the Essenes, Jesus and his disciples show an approach to community and sharing of possessions that is less organised, more open to people joining, less separate from those beyond the community and more inclusive of those who sin, without condoning it.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Some of these differences may be related to different levels of organisation, as Meier notes 'Jesus' movement shows a very low level of organization during his public ministry' compared to Qumran (Meier, *Jew*, 3:530).

¹⁹⁸ There is no evidence in John's gospel that Jesus or the other disciples approved of Judas' behaviour.

2.2.3. *Cynics*

2.2.3.1. *Evidence*

Cynicism was a branch of Greek philosophy that started around the fourth century BCE and Diogenes Laertius catalogues past Cynics. It is difficult to ascertain the extent of their influence and location, but Hock and Crossan point to their presence in the first century CE.¹⁹⁹

Cynics held to a simple life style, gave up money, often flouted norms and sometimes had disciples. They were known for their shameless behaviour and also their clothing, including a cloak, staff and bare feet.²⁰⁰ One Cynic reports of how a potential disciple 'shared out his property among his family, slung on a satchel and a doubled worn cloak, and followed me' (ps. Diogenes *Ep.* 38.5). Epictetus reports 'I am without a home, without a city, without property, without a slave; I sleep on the ground; I have neither wife nor children, no miserable governor's mansion, but only earth, and sky and one rough cloak. Yet what do I lack? Am I not free from pain and fear, am I not free?' (*Diatr.* 3.22.47) This renunciation of familial ties, particular clothing and outspokenness were seen as characteristic of what it meant to be a Cynic. While Cynics themselves may have pointed to character and other parts of life, others identified Cynics by appearance: 'But no, you say, what makes a Cynic is a contemptible wallet, a staff, and big jaws' (*Diatr.* 3.22.50). There are also examples of Cynics or other philosophers calling disciples to follow them, for example in the account of Xenophon becoming a pupil of Socrates: "Then follow me," said Socrates, "and learn." From that time onward he was a pupil of Socrates' (Diogenes Laertius, *LEP* 2.48).

When people became Cynics they also often gave away possessions and Laertius writes about Crates distributing his money 'among his fellow-citizens' (*LEP* 4.87). This fits with the quote earlier from pseudo Diogenes about the disciple sharing out his property.

This giving away of possessions resulted in a simplicity of life and Cynics also spoke of the Cynic way as being hard, for example: 'The love of money he declared to be mother-city of all evils' (Diogenes Laertius, *LEP* 2.50). Cynics also had an approach to all people as family and Epictetus reports, 'the Cynic has made all mankind his children; the men among them he has as sons, the women as

¹⁹⁹ *ABD*, 1:222; John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991, 75-76.

²⁰⁰ *ABD*, 1:1223-4.

daughters; in that spirit he approaches them all and cares for them all' (*Diatr.* 3.22.81-82).

2.2.3.2. *Links / Relationship to Jesus and his Disciples*

There is however the question of whether Cynics were in Palestine in the first century and whether Jesus and his disciples would have been aware of them and their practice or in any way related to them. There is significant discussion about the level of Hellenisation in the Galilee region with different scholars coming to significantly different conclusions.

Both 1 and 2 Maccabees point to Hellenistic influence in Jerusalem. In 1 Maccabees the author reports 'they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom' (1 Macc 1.14) and in 2 Maccabees Jason promises money to Antiochus if he gives permission for a gymnasium (2 Macc 4.9). Looking at ossuaries of the time, 39% of ossuaries in Jerusalem have only Greek inscriptions.²⁰¹ However, those who were able to afford ossuaries and inscriptions may have had a greater likelihood of also speaking Greek. Witherington concludes that there was widespread use of Greek, but this did not necessarily correlate to Hellenisation, and argues that Hellenisation principally affected the Jewish upper classes.²⁰²

The most obvious place to look for Hellenisation in Galilee is in Greek cities such as Sepphoris. The evidence for the degree of Hellenisation is mixed. Strange notes that Sepphoris was less antagonistic during the first Jewish revolt²⁰³ and this may be indicative of the town being more hellenised than the surrounding villages. However, it could just indicate that there were richer people living there who had more to lose. Strange also notes buildings in Sepphoris that indicate a degree of Hellenisation,²⁰⁴ for example the presence of a theatre.²⁰⁵ However, Dunn points out that 'the archaeological evidence for Sepphoris is as clear as for the rest of Galilee: no indications of large numbers of non-Jews and plenty of evidence of the same four indicators of Jewish religious identity (stone vessels, miqwa'oth, absence of pork remains, burial in kochim shafted tombs with ossuaries).'²⁰⁶ Similarly Strange notes the presence of ritual baths under houses in Sepphoris.²⁰⁷ So it is

²⁰¹ D. A. Fiensy, 'The Composition of the Jerusalem Church,' in R. Bauckham, ed. *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, 213-36, citing 231.

²⁰² Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 121.

²⁰³ J. F. Strange, "Galilee", in *DNTB*, 393.

²⁰⁴ Strange, "Galilee", 395.

²⁰⁵ Strange, "Galilee", 396.

²⁰⁶ Dunn, *Jesus*, 299-300.

²⁰⁷ Strange, "Galilee", 396.

unclear whether Cynics would have been present in first century Galilee. It should also be noted that Sepphoris is not mentioned in the gospels and we lack evidence that Jesus and his disciples spent time there. Witherington also points out that the parallels which Downing uses ‘almost without exception post-date the time of Jesus and in some cases even *post-date* the New Testament age’.²⁰⁸

2.2.3.3. *Similarities*

The traditional dress of a Cynic with cloak, staff and bare feet, without provision for the way and leaving home behind, shows some similarities, particularly to those disciples called and sent out by Jesus. There is the same sense of travelling simply (*LEP* 6.37) and relying on provision from others (ps. Diogenes *Ep.* 38.4, *LEP* 6.34). However there are some differences as well. In Matthew, Jesus specifies that the disciples should not take a staff, nor a bag (Matt 10.10). This is the same in Luke 9.3 and while Luke 10 does not specify whether or not the Seventy-two should carry a staff, it again points to the lack of a bag (Luke 10.4). By contrast our evidence about Cynics includes both satchel and often staff (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.22.9–11; ps Diogenes *Ep.* 38.5). Downing argues that this is actually a point of similarity as he argues that both Cynic texts and the gospels vary in what they advocate taking when travelling.²⁰⁹ However while there is variance within both sets of texts, differences still exist between them.

There are similarities between Jesus’ teaching in Matt 6 about concern about physical provision with some of the Cynic attitudes. Cynics also travel from place to place, which again is a feature of the gospel accounts of Jesus and his disciples (Mark 10.17, 32–46; 11.19, 27).

The accounts of Cynics selling their possessions on becoming Cynics parallel Jesus’ call to disciples to sell their possessions and give to the poor. However, in many of the instances where Jesus calls prospective disciples to sell and give, they do not do so (Mark 10.17–22; Luke 18.18–25) and in the accounts of those who do follow Jesus, they leave home and property, but do not necessarily sell them. Also when Cynics sell and give, they give to family and fellow citizens, not necessarily the poor.

Downing argues that the Cynics’ vision of all people as family to all has a parallel in Jesus’ words about his mother and brothers in Mark 3.31–35.²¹⁰ However

²⁰⁸ Witherington, *Sage*, 127, his italics.

²⁰⁹ F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992, 10–11.

²¹⁰ F. Gerald Downing, *Christ and the Cynics*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988, 126.

the words of Epictetus (*Diatr.* 3.22.81–82) give a picture of this relationship to all people, regardless of response, whereas Jesus’ words in Mark 3.35 are concerning those who do the will of God.

2.2.3.4. *Differences*

Socrates’ call of Xenophon (Diogenes Laertius *LEP* 2.48) shows some similarities to Jesus calling his disciples in the injunction to follow him, however it does not conform entirely either to the most common example in the Synoptics of how Jesus calls disciples from what they are doing to come and follow (Matt 4.18–22; Mark 1.17–20; Luke 5.1, 28), nor the examples in John where Jesus invites the disciples to come and see (1.39, 46; 4.29). While in John initiative on behalf of some of the disciples is shown, the testing questioning that Socrates uses, does not appear as part of Jesus’ approach to calling disciples.

Witherington points out that while there were some similarities in terms of simple lifestyle between Jesus and his disciples and the Cynics, ‘*the motivation for the behaviour is entirely different*’²¹¹ and that while there are some similarities in dress, these could be similarities to most first century teachers.²¹² Witherington further points out that Cynics aimed to improve human beings, while Jesus called his disciples to respond to the in-breaking of the kingdom.²¹³ Furthermore, while the Cynic are recorded as begging, there is no record of Jesus begging.²¹⁴

There is one major difference in focus and relationships. In the Cynic literature while there are accounts of Cynics looking at all people as their family, there is substantial focus on αὐτάρκεια and no record of Cynics sharing possessions with one another or holding money in common. Downing notes that αὐτάρκεια is one of the words that those studying the Cynics focus on.²¹⁵ While Downing questions the reliability of focusing on catchphrases, he does not question the meaning behind them. This picture of Cynics valuing αὐτάρκεια is significantly different from the account of Jesus and his disciples. While there are references to contentment and not worrying (Matt 6.25–34), the Gospels also focus on the disciples’ relationships with one another as a community, particularly in John’s gospel, where we find a focus on relationship and interdependence rather than αὐτάρκεια.

²¹¹ Witherington, *Sage*, 124, his italics.

²¹² Witherington, *Sage*, 126.

²¹³ Witherington, *Sage*, 130.

²¹⁴ Witherington, *Sage*, 132.

²¹⁵ Downing, *Christ*, 46–47.

2.2.3.5. *Conclusions*

There are a number of similarities between Cynics and Jesus and his disciples. However, the motivations for these similarities are sometimes rather different. At other times, it is not clear whether the similarities represent the closest parallel – Witherington points out that many of Jesus’ sayings, which Downing parallels to Cynic teaching, have closer parallels in the Old Testament.²¹⁶ There are also questions about whether Cynics were present in Galilee during the time of Jesus to influence his practice and that of his disciples. Significantly, while Downing devotes substantial time to drawing parallels between Jesus and the Cynics, this mainly concerns teaching, and, in terms of practice, only covers their clothing and travelling. Furthermore, the passages concerning clothing and travelling also contain differences. If Cynics were present in Galilee during the beginning of the first century CE, it is interesting that Jesus’ instructions to the Twelve and the Seventy-two would show them as different from Cynics, which raises the question of whether Jesus was making sure that his disciples could not be mistaken for Cynics.

The fact that the parallels between the Cynics and Jesus and his disciples are often mixed with significant differences, of questionable dating, and that the Cynic examples do not show sharing of possessions, would suggest that the parallel does not add to our understanding of the common purse in John, except possibly in the sense that it emphasises how the practice of Jesus and his disciples differed from the that of many of the groups around them.

2.3. Conclusion

The passages about the *γλωσσόκομον* in John’s gospel, considered in the light of all four gospels, present a picture of holding possessions in common in a very particular context. The *γλωσσόκομον* appears to be predominantly for those who travel with Jesus, both those who have left home, livelihoods and possessions to do so, and therefore may not have a means of support, and those who travel with the group and contribute to the *γλωσσόκομον* from their own resources. While there is not much information about the *γλωσσόκομον*, it appears to be used for buying food, giving to the poor and wider needs.

²¹⁶ Witherington, *Sage*, 129. Witherington does not give particular evidence about OT examples, but he does point out how the parallel of travelling widely is rather different in each case: Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 1.50 points to travelling widely and meeting all kinds of people, while the examples of the Roman Centurion and the Syro-Phonician woman are exceptions.

The γλωσσόκομον is always mentioned alongside Judas, but it is not presented as a negative example. The γλωσσόκομον is not the only way that Jesus and his disciples related to one another with regard to possessions. We see the Twelve and the Seventy-two receiving from and depending on those to whom they preach. We also find non-following associates who host Jesus and his disciples, but are not mentioned as either contributing to or receiving from the γλωσσόκομον.

When we consider the practice of Jesus and his disciples in comparison with that of rabbis and their disciples; the Qumran community and the Essenes; and Cynics, there are a few, primarily superficial, similarities. However there are significant differences. There is no evidence of rabbis and their disciples, or Cynics holding possessions in common. While the Essenes and Qumran community do hold possession in common, the practice of Jesus and his disciples is different.

First, the NT texts we have considered present an example where there is considerable flexibility in how people participate in the sharing of possessions. Not only are there different groups with different practices, which can be seen in the Essene / Qumran comparator, but also there are different practices within the group that travels with Jesus. The Twelve have left things behind and seem not to be contributing to the γλωσσόκομον, while the women of Luke 8.1-3 retain their resources and contribute from them to the γλωσσόκομον.

Secondly, the giving to the γλωσσόκομον is more flexible. Contributing to the γλωσσόκομον does not seem to be governed by the same kind of rules seen in the DSS.

Thirdly, Jesus and his disciples present an example of sharing, which is both more open to those outside the group, and also includes and extends grace towards those within the group who misuse their position. This is seen in the way Jesus and his disciples eat with those who are seen as outcasts and sinners, and in the way Judas is included in the Twelve and kept as treasurer. In contrast the Essenes and Qumran community have strict regulations about whom they eat with and punishments for those who misuse possessions or position.

3. Sharing Possessions in Acts

3.1. Background Questions

3.1.1. Introduction

Luke's gospel is frequently seen as having a major focus on the poor²¹⁷ and on use of possessions.²¹⁸ While the author's second volume, Acts,²¹⁹ does not use the word πτωχός²²⁰ and scholars such as Cassidy conclude that 'Luke does not indicate such continuity with respect to concern for the poor',²²¹ Acts does continue to focus on the use of possessions in providing both negative²²² and positive²²³ examples of their use. Similarly Kim argues that while in Acts there are, 'no direct and clear exhortations towards the rich to give alms to the poor such as are often found in the Gospel',²²⁴ Acts includes examples of such behaviour. Two of the main examples are the summary passages described in the early chapters of Acts, and the Antiochene collection for the church in Judaea. This chapter will consider both of these examples.

The chapter begins by considering relevant historical questions about Acts, the intended readership, and purpose of Luke-Acts. It then considers the community described in the summary passages in Acts 2 and 4 and referred to in the examples and issues that arise in Acts 5 and 6. It examines the Jewish and Greek parallels to the language Luke uses and what this indicates about the community and the example Luke wants to portray. It looks at other passages in Acts which may illuminate the picture of the community in the early chapters of Acts, before

²¹⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991, 22. Contra Twelvetree who sees the poor in Luke not as the disadvantaged, but as Israel as a whole (Graham H. Twelvetree, *People of the Spirit*, London: SPCK, 2009, 184).

²¹⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church. The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011, 97-98.

²¹⁹ I am presuming that Luke and Acts have the same author and will refer to the author as Luke without making any claims about who 'Luke' was.

²²⁰ Robert C. Tannehill, 'Do the Ethics of Acts include the Ethical Teaching in Luke?', in Thomas E. Phillips, ed. *Acts and Ethics*, Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005, 109-22, citing 117.

²²¹ Richard J. Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987, 24. Cassidy's point is that while the gospel of Luke focuses on the general poor, Acts considers the needy within the community as opposed to the poor in general.

²²² For example, Judas' betrayal for money (1.18), Ananias and Sapphira (5.1-11) and Simon Magus (8.18-24). Biblical references in this chapter will be to Acts unless otherwise indicated.

²²³ For example, sharing so that none are in need within the community (4.34), Barnabas (4.36-7), Dorcas (9.36) and Cornelius (10.1).

²²⁴ Kim, *Stewardship*, 218.

examining the kind of practice and theology Luke may be trying to teach through the example of the early church presented in Acts 2–6. The chapter then examines how this example compares to the practice and theology of: Jewish almsgiving, the Qumran and Essene communities, and the Pythagorean community at Croton.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the example of the collection in the Antiochene Church described in Acts 11.27–30 (which concludes in Acts 12.25). It briefly considers the historical issues surrounding the passage and its relationship to Acts 15, Galatians 2 and Paul's gift. The example is then compared with Graeco-Roman responses to famine situations, particularly the practice of appointing an affluent *curator annonae*.

3.1.2. *Historical Questions*

The historical reliability of the description of the sharing of possessions in Acts 2 and 4 (and more widely of Acts and how it relates to the Pauline Epistles) has been questioned. Reta Halteman Finger provides a summary of the range of ways that the descriptions of the early church community in Acts 2 and 4 have been read, the historical questions that have been raised about it and ways in which interpreters have read back their own values into the interpretation of the text.²²⁵ Capper notes that the description of common property in Acts, 'is almost universally read with suspicion and regarded as both idealized and barely historical.'²²⁶

Within the historical criticisms there are helpful insights and useful questions. Moreland points out 'Histories, epics, biographies, and novels were written for many reasons, but it is quite clear that the goal of providing a historically reliable account (in the modern sense) was not an ancient objective'.²²⁷ Moreland reminds us that myths are part of social formation to reproduce values²²⁸ and that Acts is written to form Christian identity in a context where there is 'no unified Christian phenomenon in existence'.²²⁹ While Acts is written in the early days of the formation of Christian identity and has (self-confessed) formational and didactic roles, this does not necessarily mean that its account is not historical. As Bock

²²⁵ Reta Halteman Finger, *Of Widows and Meals*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007, 12–46.

²²⁶ Brian J. Capper, 'Jesus, Virtuoso Religion, and the Community of Goods,' in Bruce W. Longenecker and Kelly D. Liebengood, eds, *Engaging Economics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, 60–80, citing 60.

²²⁷ Milton Moreland, 'The Jerusalem Community in Acts: Mythmaking and the Sociorhetorical Functions of a Lukan Setting,' in Todd Penner and Caroline Van der Stichele, eds, *Contextualizing Acts*, Atlanta: SBL, 2003, 285–310, citing 294.

²²⁸ Moreland, 'Jerusalem,' 297.

²²⁹ Moreland, 'Jerusalem,' 295.

points out, ‘The ancients understood history as the relating of deeds for edification’,²³⁰ and ‘It is possible for ideology and historical data to be combined in a way that reflects an appropriate historical perspective.’²³¹ This means we may look for the historical situation described by the account as well as for Luke’s purpose in describing it.

Looking at the example of the sharing of possessions in the early chapters of Acts, Capper argues, using the works of Philo and Josephus as a comparison, that idealisation in a text does not necessarily mean that it is ahistorical.²³² While analysing such idealisation will be helpful in understanding the practice and theology that Luke is trying to promote, its presence does not preclude the events being described having a historical basis. Indeed, as Bock points out, ‘where we can check Luke’s work’, it shows evidence ‘of being in touch with historical detail rather than being as creative with such detail as the epic classification suggests’.²³³ Luke’s introduction to his gospel reminds us that he at the very least wants to portray himself as writing an accurate account.

In addition, the practice portrayed in the early chapter of Acts not only has parallels with surrounding communities,²³⁴ but also has elements of continuity with the practice of Jesus and his disciples.²³⁵

Considering the emphases of Acts, Blomberg argues that Luke is concerned with the spread of the gospel to all people groups and thus his focus on the early church’s sharing goes ‘against the grain of Luke’s redactional emphases and therefore [is] particularly likely to be firmly rooted in the history of the early church.’²³⁶ While it could equally be argued that the focus in the early chapters of Acts is a continuation both of the practice of Jesus and his disciples (seen in Luke 8) and of the focus in the gospel on the poor, Blomberg’s comments remind us that such care is not the primary emphasis in Acts and thus may add historical weight to the account.

²³⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007, 11.

²³¹ Bock, *Acts*, 5.

²³² Capper, ‘Jesus,’ 77.

²³³ Bock, *Acts*, 3.

²³⁴ Capper, ‘Community,’ citing 118.

²³⁵ See §2.1.3, for example care for those in need.

²³⁶ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 160.

3.1.3. Purpose and Readership

Working out the motivations for writing Luke-Acts and who it was written for, is not a simple matter and there is a whole range of theories.²³⁷ Dunn notes a number of these, including justification of mission to the Gentiles,²³⁸ showing the unity of the church²³⁹ and providing ‘*an apologetic strand in relation to the power of Rome*’.²⁴⁰ This apologetic could be for the church in general, or for Paul, imprisoned in Rome. However, while Luke-Acts does provide an account of, and justification for, mission to the Gentiles, and indicates the unity of the church, it seems unlikely that external political apologetic was the primary motivation for writing Luke-Acts. First, while Acts does on occasion present information that could be used in defence of Paul or Christianity, it includes a wider range of material, much of which would not necessarily be relevant to a defence argument and some of which might be challenging for an official in Rome to understand (Acts 5.1-11; 11.1-18; 15.36-41). Secondly, Luke’s use of OT and LXX stylistic elements suggest an intended audience which was familiar with both.²⁴¹ Thirdly Pervo identifies Acts as ‘legitimizing narrative’ indicating that it is written to insiders to edify them,²⁴² and Haenchen argues that Luke adapts accounts to make them edifying.²⁴³

In addition Haenchen argues that Acts is written in light of the fact that the parousia had not come.²⁴⁴ Bock adds: explaining why Jews were generally unresponsive; ‘Jesus’s role and function’; and the role of witnesses as issues which Luke addresses.²⁴⁵ Peterson identifies an apologetic and evangelistic purpose to ‘help Christians in their engagement with unbelievers’²⁴⁶ and Malina and Pilch argue that Acts is written to help believers make sense of their experiences.²⁴⁷ It seems likely

²³⁷ Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982.

²³⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1996, xii. Also Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971, 94; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009, 22.

²³⁹ Dunn, *Acts*, xii.

²⁴⁰ Dunn, *Acts*, xiii (his italics). Witherington argues that the Acts 2 summary is crafted to convince Theophilus of the good character of the church. (Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, 157). Haenchen also sees Luke addressing the political problems of Christianity beginning to be seen as separate from Judaism (Haenchen, *Acts*, 102).

²⁴¹ Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Acts*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008, 7.

²⁴² Pervo, *Acts*, 21.

²⁴³ Haenchen, *Acts*, 103-107.

²⁴⁴ Haenchen, *Acts*, 95.

²⁴⁵ Bock, *Acts*, 6-7.

²⁴⁶ David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, 36-37.

²⁴⁷ Malina and Pilch, *Social-Science*, 10.

that Luke includes several emphases. While we may not be able to narrow his audience down substantially, Kim's argument that Luke's references to rich and poor²⁴⁸ indicate that his community included a range of social backgrounds seems plausible.

While we may find it difficult to be precise about exactly where Luke is writing from and to whom he is writing, we can use hints from what Luke writes to help us understand the background of his initial readership. As we consider the sharing of possessions in the Jerusalem church and the gift from the Antiochene church, we will be working with the text on three related levels – what happened in the early church, how Luke portrays what happened and how Luke's readership may have read Luke's account.

3.2. The Early Community in Jerusalem.

3.2.1. *The Texts*

3.2.1.1. *Acts 2.42-47*

The first summary of the life of the early church comes immediately after the Pentecost account and Peter's message. It provides a description of the activities of those who ἀποδεξάμενοι τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθησαν (Acts 2.41). Hargreaves proposes dividing chapter 2 into three sections with the third section, verses 42-47, describing 'how the early Christians *lived* out their Pentecost experience.'²⁴⁹ Hume identifies a chiasmic structure centred on Peter's speech,²⁵⁰ where 2.1-4 parallels 2.41-47, which emphasises the role of the Spirit in the actions of the community in 2.41-47. So as we examine the summary passage, we need to bear in mind the description of the coming of the Holy Spirit and Peter's explanation of Jesus' resurrection and the promised Holy Spirit.

Luke describes these baptised people as ἦσαν δὲ προσκαρτεροῦντες (verse 42), which Bock argues 'has the idea of persistence or persevering in something'.²⁵¹ The four things they are devoted to are: τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς, which are then explained further in the rest of the summary passage. Barrett notes 'It is not agreed whether in this verse Luke is describing the meetings of the Jerusalem Christians or their way of life in

²⁴⁸ Kim, *Stewardship*, 46-50.

²⁴⁹ John Hargreaves, *A Guide to Acts*, London: SPCK, 1990, 29.

²⁵⁰ Douglas A. Hume, *The Early Christian Community*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011, 91.

²⁵¹ Bock, *Acts*, 149.

general.²⁵² Bauernfeind sees the fourfold description as liturgical and referring to stages in a worship service²⁵³ and Jeremias sees the reference to ἡ κλᾶσις τοῦ ἄρτου indicating that it was ‘part of the church’s cult’.²⁵⁴ It seems unlikely that κοινωνία refers to worship / cult activity because it is linked with the selling of property and sharing of proceeds in verse 45.²⁵⁵ Looking at 2.43–47, verse 43 picks up the idea of the apostles’ teaching. Verses 44 and 45 then seem to relate to the much-contested κοινωνία, with verses 46 and 47 then relating to the breaking of bread and prayers.

Κοινωνία has a range of meanings from generosity²⁵⁶ to participation.²⁵⁷ Κοινωνία could be ‘spending time together as in a social club’, but it could also be sharing, including ‘the mutual obligations of partnership or association’,²⁵⁸ and ‘the type of mutuality that takes place in marriage’.²⁵⁹ Therefore to understand what Luke is describing by κοινωνία, we need to examine more closely verses 44 and 45.

These two verses bring out very practical aspects of what Luke sees κοινωνία as including (selling possessions and distributing the proceeds) as well as aspects that may be more about the mindset of the group (they had all things in common). Therefore Dupont argues that, for Luke, κοινωνία involved material and spiritual sharing of possessions,²⁶⁰ and Fitzmyer sees it as referring to the early church’s ‘communal form of life’.²⁶¹ Krodel also equates fellowship with unity and with the sharing of material goods.²⁶²

So if κοινωνία includes both practical sharing and unity of the early believers, what did it look like in practice? The sharing described in verses 44 and 45 has sometimes been equated with an early form of communism, where all the believers sold all their possessions to contribute to a common fund, or where there is ‘some kind of joint ownership’.²⁶³ Indeed Klauck argues that verse 44 ‘scheint zunächst

²⁵² C. K. Barrett, *Acts*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 162.

²⁵³ Otto Bauernfeind, *Kommentar und Studien zur Apostelgeschichte*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980, 54.

²⁵⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955, 82–83.

²⁵⁵ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987, 23. Haenchen also argues that prayers are not just at the end of the service. In Acts 3.1, the believers pray at the temple and the summary points to the whole of life not just the service (Haenchen, *Acts*, 191).

²⁵⁶ Spencer argues that κοινωνία could include almsgiving and a common table (F. Scott Spencer, *Journeying through Acts. A Literary-Cultural Reading*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004, 49).

²⁵⁷ Jacques Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles*, New York: Paulist Press, 1979, 85.

²⁵⁸ Malina and Pilch, *Social-Science*, 36.

²⁵⁹ Bock, *Acts*, 150. BDAG, 552–53, 3 Macc 4.6.

²⁶⁰ Dupont, *Salvation*, 87.

²⁶¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, New York: Doubleday, 1998, 269.

²⁶² Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986, 92–3.

²⁶³ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Leicester: IVP, 1980, 84.

auf völlige Gütergemeinschaft und obligatorischen Besitzverzicht hinzudeuten’,²⁶⁴ particularly given that Peter is able to say in 3.6 Ἀργύριον καὶ χρυσίον οὐχ ὑπάρχει μοι. However the summary suggests a somewhat different picture. First, selling possessions and distributing goods is described as an ongoing activity. Both ἐπίπρασκον and διεμέριζον are imperfect implying a continuous past activity and are qualified by the phrase καθότι ἂν τις χρεῖαν εἶχεν, suggesting that what Luke has in mind is ‘no once-for-all divestiture of property,... but periodic acts’²⁶⁵ in response to need. This points to a situation where individuals ‘owned’ their property and each ‘held his goods at the disposal of the others whenever the need arose’.²⁶⁶ While in 3.6 Peter claims to lack silver or gold, this may also be indicative of the general poverty of the early believers, whose company included those who had travelled with Jesus from Galilee and others who had come to Jerusalem for Passover and therefore were away from their sources of employment and support.

Alexander argues that ‘Luke is talking about disposable property rather than personal homes and possessions’.²⁶⁷ On the one hand Luke uses a range of words for what is sold in the two summaries, but on the other hand, as we will see in more detail later, the examples of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira show the selling of property which does not seem to include the place where they were living at the time. This does not necessarily mean that homes were considered in some way separate from other possessions and not held in common. It may rather point to a different kind of holding in common. After all while some scholars question the summaries on the basis that that Mary still owns and lives in her house in 12.12,²⁶⁸ the house is being used for the community and therefore could be argued to being held in some way in common. Walton notes that the references point to properties other than those lived in being sold.²⁶⁹

Barrett argues that their eschatological beliefs may have prompted their sharing.²⁷⁰ In a similar vein Haenchen argues that selling would not have been a

²⁶⁴ H. J. Klauck, ‘Gütergemeinschaft in der Klassischen Antike, in Qumran und im Neuen Testament,’ *Revue de Qumran* 11 (1982) 47-79, citing 69.

²⁶⁵ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 162.

²⁶⁶ Marshall, *Acts*, 84. Haenchen also argues that they did not sell everything, but rather responded to need (Haenchen, *Acts*, 192).

²⁶⁷ Loveday Alexander, *Acts. The People's Commentary*, Oxford: BRF, 2006, 37.

²⁶⁸ Krodel, *Acts*, 94. Johnson notes the summaries cannot be absolute because of the evidence of homes continuing to be owned (Johnson, *Possessions*, 21).

²⁶⁹ Steve Walton, ‘Primitive Communism in Acts? Does Acts Present the Community of Goods (2:44-45; 4:32-35) as Mistaken?’, *EQ* 80 (2008) 99-111, citing 104.

²⁷⁰ Barrett, *Acts*, 168.

long-term strategy.²⁷¹ However in 2.45 and 4.34 ‘the reason given [for sharing] is not eschatological but social’.²⁷² Also, while property is sold, it is not a total pooling, rather a holding in common, with selling happening as needed.

The summary goes on to describe the daily life of the early believers as they spent time together in the temple and in homes. Marshall points out they could just be using the outer courtyards of the temple or they could be participating in the sacrificial worship.²⁷³ It seems likely that the time in the temple included attendance at the Jewish prayers as at the beginning of chapter 3 Peter and John go to the temple at the hour of prayer (3.1).²⁷⁴ Both meeting in the temple and in homes seem to have included meals as well as praise and prayer. Wendel argues that in 2.46 both the participle clauses (τε... τε...) are dependent on the verbal phrase μετελάβανον τροφῆς.²⁷⁵ Therefore ‘Man kann nicht nur den zweiten Nebensatz syntaktisch unterordnen, den ersten dagegen als Hauptsatz übersetzen.’²⁷⁶ ‘Aus dieser Übersetzung folgt, daß die τροφή nicht nur hausweise beim Brotbrechen, sondern auch beim täglichen Templeaufenthalt eingenommen wurde.’²⁷⁷

Whether this eating included an agape meal or early form of communion is disputed. However as Newman and Nida point out the phrase τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου in Acts 2.42 ‘occurs only here and in Luke 24.35’,²⁷⁸ where it refers to Jesus being made known to Cleopas and his companion, and appears to point to this action being one they had seen before, which could include the breaking of bread at the Last Supper (Luke 22.19). Κλάω and ἄρτος are found together in Luke-Acts predominately in situations that seem to be eucharistic.²⁷⁹ The possible exceptions are Luke 9.16 in the feeding of the five thousand, which nevertheless has eucharistic verbs (λαμβάνω, δίδωμι, εὐλογέω Luke 22.19) and Acts 27.35 which also has some of the verbs (λαμβάνω, εὐχαριστέω), though interestingly does not talk about Paul giving the bread. Thus it is likely that the breaking of bread in 2.42 is some form of recollection of the Last Supper and even if the breaking of bread in 2.42 is not

²⁷¹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 233.

²⁷² Bock, *Acts*, 153.

²⁷³ Marshall, *Acts*, 85.

²⁷⁴ Schürer notes that while sacrifices were offered at dawn and dusk, in *Ant.* 14.65 Josephus refers to the evening sacrifice being at 3pm (Schürer, Vermes, Millar and Black, *History*, 2:300-301).

²⁷⁵ U. Wendel, *Gemeinde in Kraft: Das Gemeindeverständnis in den Summarien der Apostelgeschichte*, Neukirchener: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1998, 183.

²⁷⁶ Wendel, *Gemeinde*, 183.

²⁷⁷ Wendel, *Gemeinde*, 184.

²⁷⁸ Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, New York: UBS, 1972, 63.

²⁷⁹ Luke 9.16; 22.19; 24.30; Acts 2.46; 20.7, 11; 27.35.

sacramental, Luke's choice of words would suggest that he sees the meal as evoking memories of Jesus. Acts 2.46 thus implies that though eating happened both in homes and in the temple, the more formal breaking of bread happened in homes.

3.2.1.2. Acts 4.32-35

Two chapters later, Luke again summarises the life of the believers. Between the two summaries, there are examples of some aspects of the summary in chapter 2: praying in the temple (3.1) and at home (4.23-26), wonders and signs (3.7-8), more people believing (4.4) and the believers spending time together and having a common identity (4.23). Luke's summary at the end of chapter 4, which again follows the believers being filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking boldly (4.31) contains many similarities to the chapter 2 summary, leading Ehrhardt to argue that they are from the same report.²⁸⁰ Both passages speak of unity, an approach to possessions that sees them in some sense as common, practical care being provided for those in need through sale of possessions and distribution, the apostles' teaching, and God's power being seen amongst them. However there are interesting differences as well as similarities and some of the differences fit with the growth and development of the early Christian group.

Prayer at home and in the temple, and the shared meals are missing from the second summary. While it could be argued that the first summary leads into examples of prayer at home and in the temple and that Luke chooses to focus on the material sharing in the second summary to lead into the examples of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira,²⁸¹ this does not explain the absence of the common meals from the second summary. It is possible that the absence of meals from the second summary hints at the issues to come in chapter 6 with the waiting on tables.

In the second summary, instead of those who sell their possessions distributing to those in need, the proceeds are brought καὶ ἐτίθουν παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τῶν ἀποστόλων (4.35), who then distribute it to those in need. Johnson argues from both OT and NT examples that laying something at someone else's feet acknowledges 'the power and authority of another over the self and what one has',²⁸² and that the point of the second summary is to show the authority of the

²⁸⁰ Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969, 20.

²⁸¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988, 100.

²⁸² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1995, 87. Also Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called to be Church*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006, 72.

apostles.²⁸³ However as Johnson admits while in Josh 10.24, 1 Sam 25.24, Luke 8.35 and 8.41 the authority (or power) of someone is recognised, it is people who fall at the feet of others, or sit at the feet of others.²⁸⁴ The closest example Johnson provides to placing possessions at the feet of another is the woman who bathes Jesus' feet with her tears and anoints them with oil in Luke 7.37-39. Nevertheless Johnson argues that as possessions function symbolically in Acts, the laying of possessions at the feet of the apostles indicates submission of the person giving.²⁸⁵ This is plausible, but the symbol could also function in other ways, for example, as a symbol of giving through the apostles to the wider community.

While apostles have authority in the summary, particularly in the combination of testimony and power,²⁸⁶ the placing of proceeds at the feet of the apostles might rather be showing the transfer of authority over the possessions to the apostles (rather like the use of the sandal in Ruth 4.7). This move to the apostles distributing the proceeds also fits with a larger group in the process of setting up ways of organising itself as it grew beyond a point where those selling would necessarily know who was in need. Placing the proceeds at the feet of the apostles additionally 'transforms the reciprocal interaction, since by having the apostles distribute the goods, the original owner could not act as patron who would make others beholden as clients',²⁸⁷ because the goods are moved from the control of their former owners to that of the community.²⁸⁸

What is sold is also described differently and is more specifically χωρίων ἢ οἰκιῶν (4.34) rather than τὰ κτήματα καὶ τὰς ὑπάρξεις (2.45). This may be indicative of the ongoing need to support those from outside Jerusalem which could have exhausted the smaller saleable items. Krodel argues that one of the issues (which he also uses to argue that it is not an example of communism) is that the community does not have a means of production.²⁸⁹ Luke may also tighten his description to fit with the examples he goes on to describe. The selling is again linked to preventing or relieving need.

²⁸³ Johnson, *Acts*, 91.

²⁸⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977, 202.

²⁸⁵ Johnson, *Function*, 202.

²⁸⁶ Hume notes that Johnson reads the summary in the light of his experience of Western monasticism, but contextually the authority is due to the signs and wonders, and the proclamation in the face of opposition (Hume, *Early*, 135).

²⁸⁷ Malina and Pilch, *Social-Science*, 46.

²⁸⁸ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Acts*, Nashville: Abingdon, 2003, 101.

²⁸⁹ Krodel, *Acts*, 117.

This prevention and relief of need does not just appear: it follows from the presence of χάρις τε μεγάλη ἣν ἐπὶ πάντας αὐτοὺς (4.33), thus indicating that Luke sees their community as an outworking of the presence of God's grace.²⁹⁰

The summary starts with the group not claiming private ownership but rather ἣν αὐτοῖς πάντα κοινά (4.32), which is then elucidated in the description of the selling. Πωλοῦντες (4.34) is a present participle indicating an ongoing situation of selling.²⁹¹ Tannehill argues that verse 32 indicates 'a fundamental renunciation of personal ownership, which would be implemented later as needs arose',²⁹² while Klauck limits himself to arguing that 'Besitzende nicht auf ihre Rechte pochten, sondern ihr Eigentum, etwa ihre Häuser, großzügig zur Verfügung stellen.'²⁹³ Tannehill points out that Acts 4.32-35 picks up the same verbs (πωλέω, διαδίδωμι) that Jesus uses in Luke 18.22 with the rich ruler²⁹⁴ where Jesus calls him to sell everything. However, in Acts, it is clear that not all property was sold as while they had possessions and property that was held in common (4.32), later chapters in Acts show they still had property that they were using (12.12). Furthermore, the phrase about selling indicates an ongoing as opposed to one off selling (4.34).

While Luke is not describing a situation where everything is sold,²⁹⁵ his use of verbs which remind the reader of the rich ruler, suggests that he is communicating a significant shift in how individuals in the early church saw (and held) their own possessions and commending that shift to his readers. The specific description of what is sold and the examples of selling at the end of chapter 4 and beginning of chapter 5 may limit those who could contribute in this way. This leads Kim to argue that it was less a common fund, rather 'benevolent contributions of the wealthy towards the poor neighbours'.²⁹⁶ However while only those who had fields or houses could contribute in this way, all could hold what they had, little or large, in common and consider it not just their personal possession. Additionally, what is sold is then placed at the apostles' feet and is thus transferred from being an individual's gift to being part of a wider way of holding possessions.

²⁹⁰ Robinson and Wall, *Called*, 77.

²⁹¹ Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, 2 vols, Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974, 1:363,

²⁹² Tannehill, 'Ethics,' 119.

²⁹³ Klauck, 'Gütergemeinschaft,' 69.

²⁹⁴ Tannehill, 'Ethics,' 119.

²⁹⁵ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 314.

²⁹⁶ Kim, *Stewardship*, 252.

Luke's language in both summaries picks up Greek and Biblical ideals. Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς (4.34) picks up the language of Deut 15.4 (LXX): ὅτι οὐκ ἔσται ἐν σοὶ ἐνδεής. Καρδία and ψυχὴ of 4.32 can be seen in ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς δυνάμεώς σου (Deut 6.5) and the ψυχὴ μία in ὁ κατάλοιπος ἰσραὴλ ψυχὴ μία (1 Chr 12.38). Bock notes a number of other places in the OT where the idea of unity of heart and soul appears (Deut 10.12, 11.13, Jer 32.39 [39.39 LXX]).²⁹⁷ Dupont argues that Luke uses the reference to unity of heart and soul to indicate that 'it is the spiritual unity existing among Christians which leads to their sharing material goods'.²⁹⁸

However similar language is also found in Greek thought and Gaventa notes the similarities with 'other philosophical and religious groups that stressed the importance of friendship'.²⁹⁹ Friendship was often described as involving being a single soul and there were references to holding things in common. For example, Plutarch in his 'Dialogue on Love' notes the phrase κοινὰ τὰ φίλων (*Mor.* 767E) is only valid where the souls of the people are joined. For Cicero, 'the effect of friendship is to make, as it were, one soul out of many' (*Amic.* 25.92). Diogenes Laertius notes that Aristotle's reply, to the question of what a friend is, was μία ψυχὴ δύο σώμασιν ἐνοικοῦσα (A single soul dwelling in two bodies) (Diogenes Laertius *LEP* 5.19–20) and that Bion misuses the maxim Κοινὰ τὰ φίλων (friends share in common) (Diogenes Laertius *LEP* 4.53).³⁰⁰ Therefore, Luke's use of language would also 'have reminded Luke's original readers of the notion of friendship which was prevalent at that time in the Greco-Roman world'.³⁰¹

However these phrases operated as proverbs and as Mitchell points out they were used in different ways in different texts,³⁰² so how is Luke using them? Johnson asserts that the use of these phrases is analogous to their use in descriptions of a past Golden Age and that therefore Luke uses them to denote the ideal beginnings of the church.³⁰³ However Mitchell argues that Luke has a wider purpose in using these friendship proverbs and argues that he 'used the friendship traditions to unify his community across social lines'³⁰⁴ and to challenge 'the

²⁹⁷ Bock, *Acts*, 213.

²⁹⁸ Dupont, *Salvation*, 96.

²⁹⁹ Gaventa, *Acts*, 81.

³⁰⁰ Aristotle also picks up this proverb in *Nic. Eth.* 9.2.

³⁰¹ Dupont, *Salvation*, 97.

³⁰² Alan C. Mitchell, 'The Social Function of Friendship in Acts 2:44–47 and 4:32–37,' *JBL* 111 (1992) 255–272, citing 256.

³⁰³ Johnson, *Possessions*, 120–21.

³⁰⁴ Mitchell, 'Social,' 258.

reciprocity ethic'.³⁰⁵ We will examine friendship in Graeco-Roman writings and then consider how Luke uses the friendship proverbs to draw on some aspects of the ideals of Graeco-Roman friendship and yet paint a distinctive picture.

In descriptions of a Golden Age, for example in Plato's *Republic*, sharing is between members of a particular class, the Guardians, so that they can fulfil a role (*Resp.* 416D, 416E, 449C).³⁰⁶ However such sharing is not always seen as beneficial. In Aristotle's *Politics* there is an acknowledgement of the ideal of unity and communal holding, but Aristotle goes on to point out that people neglect commonly held property (1261b).

However references to unity and sharing are not limited to descriptions of a Golden Age or politics. Having expounded some of the difficulties of sharing possessions and communal holding of possessions, Aristotle argues for an improvement in virtue so that those who are friends ἰδίας γὰρ ἕκαστος τὴν κτῆσιν ἔχων τὰ μὲν χρήσιμα ποιεῖ τοῖς φίλοις τοῖς δὲ χρῆται κοινοῖς (while owning their property privately put their own possessions at the service of their friends and make use of their friends' possessions as common property) (*Pol.* 1263a). Epicurus argues against holding property in common because common ownership implies a mistrust of friends (*LEP* 10.11).³⁰⁷ Thus Dupont argues that in Graeco-Roman descriptions of sharing amongst or between friends: 'There is no question in this case of legal transfer of titles, for each individual remains owner of his possessions, but affection for his brothers impels each one to put what he has at their disposal.'³⁰⁸

In *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle speaks of the way that friendship involves affection (1159a), approves of the proverb κοινὰ τὰ φίλων (1159b) and later agrees that friends have one soul (1163b). Thus to assist a friend with money is to behave virtuously as a friend (1130a). However this sharing between friends is based on equality between the people and equal shares (1131a). Aristotle does mention the existence of some unequal friendships, for example between husband and wife, and between parents and children (1158b), however he goes on to say that when inequality arises in friendship the people involved 'no longer remain nor indeed expect to remain friends' (1158b-1159a). Thus Hume argues that Graeco-Roman friendships were normally between equals who could show reciprocity to one another and 'The general rule in all kinds of friendship is that reciprocity is in some

³⁰⁵ Mitchell, 'Social,' 259.

³⁰⁶ Klauck, 'Gütergemeinschaft,' 49.

³⁰⁷ Dupont, *Salvation*, 90.

³⁰⁸ Dupont, *Salvation*, 91.

way expected or required.³⁰⁹ Mitchell notes that in both horizontal and vertical (patron-client relationship) friendship ‘giving was done with an eye to receiving, whether it be for further material gain, honor, or prestige.’³¹⁰

When we look at Luke’s summary passages and at the Greek ideas of friendship we do see some parallels. There is the sense of sharing at the beginning of time and the sharing at the beginning of the church. There is a holding in common of property, which seems to involve each person retaining their property, but holding it in common, ready to put it at the disposal of the others.

However there are also differences. There is no mention of a return for the giving in the summaries, which fits with Luke 6.34-35a; 14.12-14 and Acts 20.35.³¹¹ Dupont argues that Luke contrasts the unity of heart and mind with instances of ‘one’s own’. So Judas goes εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον (1.25),³¹² while the fishermen leave τὰ ἴδια (Luke 18.28). Mitchell notes that Acts 3, with the healing of the man, would normally be seen as a benefaction, yet Peter does not expect a return.³¹³ We have also noted the way that the placing of the proceeds of the sales at the apostles’ feet circumvents the possibility of building individual patron-client relationships.

So Luke appears to be echoing the Graeco-Roman idea of friendship involving holding property in common and sharing, while undermining the idea of reciprocity in friendship.³¹⁴ This is reinforced by the fact that while Luke does use friendship language, in these passages he does not call the members of the early church friends or brothers, but believers, which points to faith as the uniting factor and motivation.³¹⁵ The way that Luke picks up both OT language and ideals and Graeco-Roman language and ideals³¹⁶ would also suggest that he is not simply lifting the Graeco-Roman model and using it without modification.

3.2.1.3. Acts 4.36-5.11

As with the first summary, Luke follows the second summary with examples of what he has summarised: one positive and one negative. Luke uses this moment to

³⁰⁹ Hume, *Early*, 52-53.

³¹⁰ Mitchell, ‘Social,’ 264.

³¹¹ Mitchell, ‘Social,’ 266-67.

³¹² While Mitchell argues that Judas also ‘buys a field of his own’ (Mitchell, ‘Social,’ 268), this is not quite as specific in the Greek where simply ἐκτήσατο χωρίον (1.18).

³¹³ Mitchell, ‘Social,’ 271.

³¹⁴ Indeed Mitchell argues that ‘Luke... uses friendship to equalize relationships in his own community’ (Mitchell, ‘Social,’ 272).

³¹⁵ Dupont, *Salvation*, 103.

³¹⁶ Haenchen argues that ‘Luke has here completely fused his OT heritage, transmitted via LXX, with Greek material’ (Haenchen, *Acts*, 231).

introduce Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus, who sells a field that belongs to him and then brings the money to the feet of the apostles. Barnabas is described as selling ἄγροῦ (4.37), not all his fields, or all his property, but a single one. It could have been the sum total of his fields, but is unlikely to be all he possessed as he presumably lived somewhere that was not a field. However the fact that Barnabas has a field in the first place leads to questions. Luke reports that Barnabas was a Levite (3.36). Therefore according to OT law he should not have possessed any land (Num 18.20; Deut 10.9; 12.12; Josh 14.3–4). There are a number of ways to explain this situation. The field might have been part of the pastureland referred to in Josh 14.4. Alternatively the field could have been in Cyprus³¹⁷ or somewhere else outside Judaea, which seems plausible given that Barnabas is described as a native of Cyprus. Then the field would be outside the apportioning of the promised land referred to in the OT passages. A third possibility is that the field was in Judaea and that Barnabas, like many other Levites³¹⁸ was not holding to this OT law on land as tightly as it he might have.

If it is this third option, then the selling of the field might be seen not just as an example of the summary passage, but also as Barnabas renewing the covenant and thus abiding by OT law being unable to own land.³¹⁹ This might then reduce its force as an example for Luke's readers if they did not see themselves as needing to abide by levitical norms, though it would build the image of the early church community living out the covenant. However Luke passes no comment on the appropriateness or otherwise of Barnabas having a field in the first place and goes on to describe Ananias and Sapphira as a counter example. If Barnabas' example is primarily of a Levite returning to obedience to OT law, we might expect Ananias and Sapphira to provide a second example of levitical or priestly families selling their land, but there is no indication that Ananias and Sapphira are from a levitical or priestly background. Therefore it seems more likely that Barnabas is presented as a more generic positive example, even if the third option is the correct one and Barnabas is partly motivated by the OT law.

³¹⁷ Malina and Pilch, *Social-Science*, 48; Alexander, *Acts*, 47; Krodel suggests in Cyprus or that the law was no longer in force (Krodel, *Acts*, 119), while Marshall argues the location of the field is unclear (Marshall, *Acts*, 110).

³¹⁸ Josephus describes himself in *Life* 15 as being from a priestly family, yet in *Life* 76, he is seen possessing land and then receiving more land from Titus Caesar. See Bock, *Acts*, 216; Robinson and Wall, *Called*, 75; and Witherington, *Acts*, 209.

³¹⁹ Finger, *Widows*, 133.

Several scholars, including Conzelmann, suggest that the reason that Luke only gives one positive example is that Barnabas was an exception and that Luke creates the summary by generalising from this example.³²⁰ However Finger raises a wider question of how we interpret Barnabas' giving. She observes that modern scholars may be using middle-class assumptions in approaching the text and comments that Barnabas is probably one of the few who owned land³²¹ and therefore was one of the few who was able to give in this way.

Luke does not just provide a positive example alongside the summary, but also a negative example: that of Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 5.1–11 is not an easy passage and Conzelmann concludes that 'no historical kernel can be extracted'.³²² While the passage is difficult to interpret, this does not necessarily mean that it wholly ahistorical, indeed Bock argues that 'The very uniqueness of the story argues for its credibility'.³²³ The example of Ananias and Sapphira does not fit with an idealised picture of the early church, but rather shows that Luke is ready to consider problems in the early church.³²⁴

Ananias, with the consent of Sapphira, like Barnabas, sells a piece of property. Again, there is no mention of whether or not it is all his property, just that they sold a particular piece. However, unlike Barnabas, Ananias ἐνέγκας μέρος τι παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τῶν ἀποστόλων ἔθηκεν (5.2). What follows is a series of questions from Peter which are not straightforward to understand and where different scholars hypothesise different situations to explain Peter's words.

Peter's initial question picks up the words about Satan entering Judas (Luke 22.3) and accuses Ananias of lying to the Holy Spirit and νοσφίσασθαι ἀπὸ τῆς τιμῆς τοῦ χωρίου (5.3). Νοσφίσασθαι is often translated as 'to keep back' (NRSV, NIV), but its use elsewhere suggests a stronger sense. Capper notes that the use of the verb in the NT, Apocrypha and OT (LXX) points to stealing or pilfering, to taking what is not theirs to have (Titus 2.10; 2 Macc 4.32; Josh 7.1) and thus argues that 'we are dealing with a matter of "theft", i.e. that they had no right to retain any part of the proceeds of the sale of their property',³²⁵ a view also held by Lake and

³²⁰ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 36; Haenchen, *Acts*, 233; Dupont, *Salvation*, 93–94; Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1967, 38–39.

³²¹ Finger, *Widows*, 9, 133.

³²² Conzelmann, *Acts*, 37.

³²³ Bock, *Acts*, 220. Also Jervell argues for a historical situation behind the narrative (Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998, 199).

³²⁴ Bock, *Acts*, 150.

³²⁵ Capper, 'Community,' 122.

Cadbury, who conclude that ‘It is possible that the author of Acts regards the field of Ananias as thus vowed or dedicated before it was converted into money.’³²⁶ However this is less clear since Peter goes on to ask οὐχὶ μένον σοὶ ἔμενεν καὶ προῦθεν ἐν τῇ σῇ ἐξουσίᾳ ὑπῆρχεν (5.4); this would indicate a situation where even when it was sold, the proceeds belonged to Ananias and Sapphira. So what actually constitutes the problem? Klauck highlights a tension in 5.2–3, about whether the issue is the withholding or the lying about the withholding.³²⁷ It is possible that through the action of bringing the proceeds to the apostles’ feet or through his words as he did so, Ananias presented what he was giving as the whole of the proceeds from the sale and thus that withholding from the amount constituted lying. Gaventa argues for an interpretation whereby the land and proceeds belong to Ananias and Sapphira, until they place it at the feet of the apostles, when the whole of the sale belongs to the group.³²⁸

The words of Peter also help us to interpret further the summary passage for while οὐδὲ εἷς τι τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐτῶν ἔλεγεν ἴδιον εἶναι ἀλλ’ ἦν αὐτοῖς ἅπαντα κοινά (4.32), it is clear that it was still private property and it was the owner of the property who then took the choice to sell and bring the proceeds. Marshall concludes that ‘the things which each person possessed evidently continued to be his own property until it was found necessary to sell them for the common good.’³²⁹

Capper conceives of a situation similar to that in Qumran with a staged entry into community where property is handed over, but retained separately before being merged into the main amount. He discounts other options including: ‘dedication of the property in advance of sale’,³³⁰ on the basis that it does not fit with Peter’s assumption that the money is theirs after the sale; and a declaration of intent after the sale,³³¹ arguing that Peter would then have referred back to this declaration.

In Capper’s model, the money would have continued to be Ananias and Sapphira’s even once it had been handed over, which leads Capper to suggest that the Hebrew verb behind προῦθεν may be מכר, which he argues has a wider meaning than sell and can include handing over. Peter would then be asking rhetorically ‘And after it was handed over, were not the proceeds at your disposal?’

³²⁶ Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 5 vols, London: Macmillan, 1933, 4:50.

³²⁷ Klauck, ‘Gütergemeinschaft,’ 70.

³²⁸ Gaventa, *Acts*, 102–3.

³²⁹ Marshall, *Acts*, 108.

³³⁰ Capper, ‘Community,’ 118.

³³¹ Capper, ‘Community,’ 119.

with Peter emphasizing ‘that Ananias was yielding his possession (i.e. control) of his property, but not his ownership of it, to the community’.³³² However there are various problems with this argument. First, this model presumes that this piece of property was all that they had, which is not clear from ἐπώλησεν κτῆμα (5.1). Secondly, the summaries both also suggest an ongoing selling and handing over in response to need, which would indicate that the proceeds were needed and used rather than being kept separate and that the situation was more fluid than that of a staged novitiate. Thirdly, the early Acts accounts of entry into the Christian community do not generally show evidence of a staged entry; rather they show an immediate entry (2.37–39; 5.14; 8.36–39). The examples where there seems to be more of a process are Paul, where it takes time for other believers to accept him; and the inclusion of the Gentiles, where it takes time for the whole of the church community to accept the Gentile believers. However neither of these equates to a staged novitiate.

Peter’s accusation of lying suggests that either by their words (after the sale, possibly as they brought the proceeds) or by their actions, they had indicated that the amount of money they brought was the entire proceeds of the sale. The problem is then squaring the possibility, presumed by Peter’s words, that they could have brought only a portion of the proceeds if they had been honest about it, with the summaries which describe a situation where no one claimed private ownership (4.32).³³³

It may be that there was an understanding that a sale might have more than one purpose: the person selling might have a particular need, which they would supply out of the sale, as well as contributing to the fund which would supply others in need. Money which was not handed over, but held openly by the individual, who sold property, need not have been considered ‘their own’: however, with Ananias and Sapphira, that which is withheld is hidden and therefore breaks the trust implicit in holding everything in common (even when it is not put in one pot). Alternatively it may be that the main practice of the group was of holding in common, but that different people became part of the group and participated in the

³³² Capper, ‘Community,’ 125.

³³³ Harrill suggests that the judgment is in the context of the oath rituals often used in business / property transactions which included a self-curse for perjury (J. Albert Harrill, ‘Divine Judgment against Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11): A Stock Scene of Perjury and Death,’ *JBL* 130 (2011) 351–69, citing 353).

group in different ways and at different speeds, with an understanding that honesty and transparency was paramount in their interactions with one another.

3.2.1.4. Acts 6.1-6

The other passage which points to some kind of shared possessions or community is Acts 6.1-6 where Luke recounts a complaint from the Hellenists that their widows are being neglected in the daily distribution of food (6.1).

This situation arises in the context of the growth of the church³³⁴ and Krodel notes that the account is bounded by descriptions of growth (6.1, 7),³³⁵ which leads Alexander to suggest that this increase in numbers leads to the church outgrowing 'its original structures'.³³⁶ The situation also occurs in the context of persecution and Finger argues Luke uses the link between the end of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6 to indicate that the issue arises at the same time as the persecution.³³⁷

The issue arises between the Hebrews and the Hellenists.³³⁸ Bock and Bruce suggest that language is the main factor in distinguishing between the Hebrews and the Hellenists, with the Hellenists being those who used Greek³³⁹ and who may have attended separate synagogues where Greek was used.³⁴⁰ The Hellenists could be pilgrims who had come for Pentecost or who had come to die in the city,³⁴¹ but Fiensey argues they could also be Greek speaking Jews from the lower city.³⁴² Thus the Hellenists could include relative newcomers (who came to Jerusalem for Pentecost and who had converted), newly settled (who had come to Jerusalem to die) and long term residents. However despite the difference in language (and possibly synagogues), it seems likely that Hellenists and Hebrews did meet together in some form – if they were always separate why did the Hellenists complain? Also the summary accounts relate the believers all being together and it seems likely Barnabas was a Hellenist, given that he was from Cyprus.³⁴³

³³⁴ Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 221.

³³⁵ Krodel, *Acts*, 131.

³³⁶ Alexander, *Acts*, 54.

³³⁷ Finger, *Widows*, 252.

³³⁸ Barrett notes that the term Hellenist is used by Luke in different ways (Barrett, *Acts*, 1:309).

³³⁹ Bock, *Acts*, 258; also David W. Pao, 'Waiters or Preachers: Acts 6:1-7 and the Lukan Table Fellowship Motif,' *JBL* 130 (2011) 127-44, citing 128; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 216; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 346.

³⁴⁰ Bruce, *Acts*, 120.

³⁴¹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 266.

³⁴² Fiensey, 'Composition,' 235.

³⁴³ Finger, *Widows*, 161.

In order to understand what went wrong and the solution, it may help to consider to what ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ τῇ καθημερινῇ (6.1) refers. Bruce envisages money from the common fund being handing over by almoners.³⁴⁴ Malina and Pilch highlight the NRSV translation of ‘distribution of food’, but note that διακονία can have a more general meaning and suggest that the seven were some sort of supervising managers.³⁴⁵ However Capper argues that the help is given in the context of meal-fellowship³⁴⁶ because Luke has already highlighted meal-fellowship in Acts 2.42, 46 and there is continued attestation in the NT of meal-fellowship (Acts 20.7-11, 1 Cor 11.17-34, Jude 12).³⁴⁷

The use of διακονεῖν τραπέζαις (6.2) also does not necessarily point one way or the other. Τράπεζα can be used of a table in the tabernacle, a table for a meal, figuratively for food, but also as a table which money-changers use.³⁴⁸ Pao notes that Luke uses τραπέζα for both a banker’s counter (Luke 19.23) and a dining table (Luke 16.21; 22.21).³⁴⁹ Διακονία similarly can include service as part of ‘preparations for a meal’, the office of prophets and apostles, and aid support or distribution.³⁵⁰ Pao notes Luke uses διακονία alongside τραπέζα in his account of the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22.21-30).³⁵¹ He argues that as the words are rarely used together elsewhere, Luke is indicating serving at a meal. In addition, 2.45 and 4.35 use different words for distribution.³⁵²

Finger argues that the reference to serving at tables refers back to the communal meals of Acts 2, which included everyone.³⁵³ Finger notes that it is important for us to remember that in first century Palestine most are poor, not a minority, therefore the question is less about whether a few people are receiving alms, but rather whether everyone is being included in the provision.³⁵⁴ It does seem likely that there could be large numbers who could be dependent on such provision. Not only were many poor in Palestine, but there would also be those who had come from Galilee with the group of disciples and were away from their

³⁴⁴ Bruce, *Acts*, 120-21.

³⁴⁵ Malina and Pilch, *Social-Science*, 55.

³⁴⁶ Brian Capper, ‘Reciprocity and the Ethic of Acts,’ <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/arts-humanities/theology-and-religious-studies/docs/bjc2/acts.doc>, accessed 20/11/2011, 14.

³⁴⁷ Capper, ‘Reciprocity,’ 13-14.

³⁴⁸ BDAG, 1013.

³⁴⁹ Pao, ‘Waiters,’ 135.

³⁵⁰ BDAG, 230.

³⁵¹ Pao, ‘Waiters,’ 135.

³⁵² Pao, ‘Waiters,’ 135-36.

³⁵³ Finger, *Widows*, 257.

³⁵⁴ Finger, *Widows*, 255-56.

homes and livelihoods, as well as those who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost, converted and may have stayed on for some time. In addition as persecution arose, it may have led to believers being denied other provision or finding it difficult to get daily work. For larger numbers in need, buying and cooking together would be more economical. Wendel's analysis of 2.46,³⁵⁵ shows the early church ate together both in the temple courts and in homes and gives a picture where distribution could have happened in and through shared meals in the temple courts.³⁵⁶ Therefore it seems likely that the provision being described in Acts 6 occurred in the context of meal-fellowship.

So in this situation of distribution for daily provision of meals, who is being overlooked and how? As Capper points out the fact that people are being overlooked and are in need does not contradict the presence of sharing as, if proceeds of sales were placed at the feet of the apostles, it would have been in the hands of a few, rather than accessible to all.³⁵⁷

This seems to have led to some people being overlooked as distributions were made, specifically the Hellenistic widows.³⁵⁸ Finger notes that, in first century Palestine, widows could be vulnerable. If they had living sons, they would probably be cared for by them and they could keep part of their dowry, but this would have kept them for only about a year after their husband's death.³⁵⁹ Finger notes the options of remarriage and prostitution as forms of survival and argues that this latter option would not have been open to Christian women. Additionally prostitutes who had left their former life to follow Jesus, would have found it difficult to remarry.³⁶⁰ Spencer argues that Hellenist widows were more vulnerable than other widows as they were 'isolated from wider kinship support networks in their Diaspora homelands'.³⁶¹ While this would have been true for Diaspora Hellenists, it would not have been the case for Jerusalem Hellenists. Haenchen argues the Hellenists and Hebrews may have been seen as distinct by outsiders so that one was

³⁵⁵ See §3.2.1.1.

³⁵⁶ Wendel goes on to suggest that the eating together in the temple could have been open to more than the believers and sees evangelism taking place in the context of the sharing of meals (Wendel, *Gemeinde*, 219-20).

³⁵⁷ Brian Capper, 'The Palestinian Cultural Context of the Earliest Christian Community of Goods,' in R. Bauckham, ed. *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, 323-56, citing 350.

³⁵⁸ Jervell notes that wives were generally younger than their husbands as background to the presence of widows (Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 216).

³⁵⁹ Finger, *Widows*, 211.

³⁶⁰ Finger, *Widows*, 211-213.

³⁶¹ Spencer, *Journeying*, 76.

persecuted and the other not,³⁶² however in Acts 5.18 it is the apostles who are arrested, who are presumably Hebrews rather than Hellenists.

Finger suggests an entirely different interpretation of the overlooking of the widows. She argues that the situation in Acts 6 arises in the context of daily meals,³⁶³ where most of the tasks of preparing and clearing up are seen as primarily female,³⁶⁴ that the early church may have had a particular role for widows within this,³⁶⁵ and that the women may have been competing for various roles and honours involved with serving, or that those who served the women at the end may have refused to serve the Hellenist widows.³⁶⁶ This provides another angle to consider the picture from. Acts 6 does arise in the context of daily meals. However there does not seem to be clear evidence or a way to prove that the overlooking is of positions rather than provision. Finger's proposal presumes that everyone eats together and then certain women are missed out in the honours. However this raises the question of why it becomes a particular issue at this time and the solution in Acts 6 suggests that the group of believers may not generally be meeting all together, for προσκαλεσάμενοι δὲ οἱ δώδεκα τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν (6.2), rather than simply addressing the issue when they are together in the temple courts, which if the situation in 2.46 were continuing is what might be expected. It is possible that a change in context of meals and provision is taking place which has precipitated the overlooking of the widows.

We suggest a third possibility that could encompass the overlooking of the widows either in being served or in roles in the serving. Acts 2.46 suggests that the early church had meals in two ways: in homes and in the temple courts. The persecution and growth described in the subsequent chapters, and particularly noted in 5.40–6.1 may have made it difficult to meet together in the temple court to eat. The early church community would then have needed to find other ways of managing meals and food distribution. With people from different locations around the city and different language backgrounds, it may have been easy to overlook particular people either as recipients or for roles in the distribution of food. In this third possibility, those appointed need to have a connection to the Hellenists, to be able to oversee the process of food distribution (or who gets to distribute the

³⁶² Haenchen, *Acts*, 266.

³⁶³ Finger, *Widows*, 257.

³⁶⁴ Finger, *Widows*, 262.

³⁶⁵ Finger, *Widows*, 213, 260.

³⁶⁶ Finger, *Widows*, 264.

food), and probably to have some form of leadership role as the persecution may have made it difficult for the whole church to gather together for teaching and prayer as well as sharing meals.

Whether the widows were being overlooked in the roles given or in the food shared, or both, a problem arises in the process. The early church responds by προσκαλεσάμενοι δὲ οἱ δώδεκα τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν, which as Finger points out indicates the significance of this daily provision in their sight.³⁶⁷ Seven men are then appointed to deal with the issue. Those who are appointed have Greek names.³⁶⁸ Their exact remit is not clear as when we come across them later in Acts, they are preaching, evangelising and being martyred (Acts 7; 8.5, 26–40), which leads several scholars to point to the main point of the story being to introduce the seven as leaders for the Hellenist community.³⁶⁹ However as Barrett points out ‘it would be bad writing first of all to make up a job for them and then represent them as neglecting it for another.’³⁷⁰ Therefore overseeing the provision is part of their remit.

Spencer sees the appointment of the seven as ‘resisting Jesus’ comprehensive ministerial program’.³⁷¹ However the text points to the whole group knowing what is happening and communication between them. They come to a decision together. That decision is for provision, rather than against provision and does not suggest that it was a lower standard of provision that was afforded to the Hellenist widows. The summaries in Acts 2 and 4 do not indicate that everyone sells everything, but rather that individuals do not hold their possessions as their own and therefore are ready to sell and give when there is a need (Acts 2.45; 4.34–35). Therefore provision for widows, irrespective of whether it is through shared meals or money is not necessarily a step back from this position, but potentially an outworking of it. The introduction to the issue indicates that it takes place in the context of change, both increasing numbers of believers and persecution, which would have made it harder for all the believers to meet together and eat together as regularly as they did in the initial stages. This growth would also have meant there was a natural need for more leaders and therefore when the seven were appointed to oversee the provision, their remit may well have grown. The criteria for choosing

³⁶⁷ Finger, *Widows*, 267.

³⁶⁸ Finger, *Widows*, 272.

³⁶⁹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 265; Capper, ‘Palestinian,’ 354 – includes care as part of the leadership remit.

³⁷⁰ Barrett, *Acts*, 306.

³⁷¹ Spencer, *Journeying*, 66.

the seven (6.3) are ones that could also be used to choose those to be involved in teaching and mission.

3.2.1.5. *Other Key Acts passages*

While there are a number of passages in the early chapters of Acts which relate to the use of possessions among believers, this picture does not continue through Acts. However there are a number of passages which touch upon issues to do with money, possessions and giving, primarily through their descriptions of individuals. In Acts 8.18–23 Simon offers money in exchange for the power of praying for people to be given the Holy Spirit. Peter's response (8.20) makes it clear that God's gift cannot be bought with money. In 9.36 Dorcas, also known as Tabitha, is described as πλήρης ἔργων ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἐλεημοσυνῶν ὧν ἐποίει.

In Acts 10.1 Cornelius is described as ποιῶν ἐλεημοσύνας πολλὰς τῷ λαῷ. It is notable that his devoutness and prayer are mentioned alongside his acts of mercy and almsgiving. In Philippi, Lydia's response to believing and being baptised is to extend hospitality to Paul and Timothy (16.15).

In Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders and at the very end of Acts there are hints of how Paul lived. Acts 20.33–35 indicates Paul worked to support himself and others. Paul then uses Jesus' words to exhort the elders to follow his example in supporting the weak: Μακάριόν ἐστιν μᾶλλον διδόναι ἢ λαμβάνειν (20.35).

At the end of Acts Luke describes Paul under house arrest in Rome where Ἐνέμεινεν δὲ διετίαν ὅλην ἐν ἰδίῳ μισθώματι, καὶ ἀπεδέχετο πάντας τοὺς εἰσπορευομένους πρὸς αὐτόν (28.30). There are a couple of ways of translating this phrase. Bock points out that μισθώματι is a NT hapax and may suggest 'earning', but that Ἐνέμεινεν can suggest the locale giving two options: either Paul lived 'at his own expense' or in his 'own rented quarters'.³⁷² In the first instance Paul is the one responsible for financing his stay, while in the second, he is in his own quarters and Bock suggests that the Philippian contribution may have helped pay for it. Paul welcomed those who came to him, whether this was simply to discuss with them, or a wider hospitality is unclear, but it seems plausible that Paul's welcome may have included hospitality or some sharing of food as some of his visitors spent the whole day with him (28.23).

As well as the examples of individuals who show mercy, give alms and work to support themselves and others, there is 11.19–30 with the account of the gift from

³⁷² Bock, *Acts*, 757.

Antioch and Paul's description in 24.17 of how ἐλεημοσύνας ποιήσων εἰς τὸ ἔθνος μου παρεγενόμεν, which Bock sees as referring to the collection.³⁷³ In the second half of this chapter we will look in greater detail at the gift from the church in Antioch to the believers in Judaea and then in chapter five at the collection.

3.2.2. *The Example of the Early Church*

So given these different passages and examples, what example of theology and practice does the early church give and how does Luke intend his readers to interpret his account?

Various issues have led to questions about the historical basis of Luke's description of the early community's sharing and whether it is, or whether Luke intends it to be, an example for his readers to follow. First, the tensions and discontinuities between the early and later chapters of Acts,³⁷⁴ and the idealisation present in the summary passages³⁷⁵ have led some scholars to question the historicity of the descriptions.³⁷⁶ However the presence of idealisation does not mean a description is ahistorical, for example Philo and Josephus idealise their descriptions of the Essenes.³⁷⁷ Similarly, Kim argues the presence of internal evidence in the named positive and negative examples, and external evidence in the Qumran and Essene communities suggest that the description has a historical basis.³⁷⁸

Even if there is a historical basis to the account, we should not necessarily assume that Luke intends it to be an example for his readers. Several scholars argue that sharing happened in the early church, but led to impoverishment and the need for others beyond Jerusalem to support the early church. Bruce suggests that funds running out and the famine led to dependency in the Jerusalem church,³⁷⁹ while Dupont suggests such giving may be behind 'the impoverishment of the whole community'³⁸⁰ and Conzelmann asserts 'Luke does not present this way of life as a norm for the organization of the church in his own time.'³⁸¹

³⁷³ Bock, *Acts*, 693.

³⁷⁴ Capper, 'Reciprocity,' 5.

³⁷⁵ Capper, 'Palestinian,' 325.

³⁷⁶ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 24.

³⁷⁷ Capper, 'Jesus,' 77.

³⁷⁸ Kim, *Stewardship*, 229-231; also Capper, 'Palestinian,' 335-36.

³⁷⁹ Bruce, *Acts*, 101.

³⁸⁰ Dupont, *Salvation*, 94.

³⁸¹ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 24.

However the difficulties and need in the Jerusalem church may arise out of the specific social and political context in Jerusalem.³⁸² Haenchen notes the presence of ‘famine and continued unrest’³⁸³ and Theissen comments on the inequalities in distribution of goods and overpopulation.³⁸⁴ It is possible that those in particular need might move to Jerusalem ‘to beg from those who came to the Temple’.³⁸⁵ In addition the presence of those from outside the area in the church, and persecution may have made it more difficult for the early church. These factors mean that the church in Jerusalem could easily be in need without the sharing in Acts 2 and 4 being the cause of that need. Indeed Finger argues that the survival of the community in Jerusalem ‘may very well be attributed to their community of goods’.³⁸⁶ Therefore it seems unlikely that Luke intends the summary passages to be a negative example for his readers.

We have already noted that history in the ancient world was often recounted to edify the reader.³⁸⁷ The presence of idealised motifs may imply that Luke intends his readers to aspire to emulate the examples presented. Hume argues that Luke crafts his summaries is ‘to present his readers with an idealized model of life in their own congregations’,³⁸⁸ which should include sharing possessions.³⁸⁹ However, the summary passages providing an example to Luke’s readers need not mean that Luke presumes that they will reproduce the situation. Kim argues that in Luke’s gospel the disciples are seen as models to follow,³⁹⁰ but that Luke was encouraging almsgiving rather than community of goods.³⁹¹ Kim’s conclusion is based on the variety of examples presented in both the gospel and Acts. If we are to take the variety of material seriously, what kind of example is Luke giving us through the summary passages? Both Capper and Kim argue for two kinds of discipleship.

³⁸² Some issues are questioned, for example Sanders argues that Roman taxes were set with the local situation in mind and therefore would have taken into account the temple taxes and tithes. (E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE*, London: SCM, 1992, 162, 167).

³⁸³ Haenchen, *Acts*, 235.

³⁸⁴ G. Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus*, London: SCM, 1978, 40–42.

³⁸⁵ Walton, ‘Primitive,’ 109.

³⁸⁶ Finger, *Widows*, 140.

³⁸⁷ Pervo, *Acts*, 21.

³⁸⁸ Hume, *Early*, 12. Hume is here referring to an unpublished PhD thesis: William Andy Chambers ‘An Evaluation of Characteristic Activity in a Model Church as set Forth by the Summary Narratives of Acts.’ 227–30. Also Wendel, *Gemeinde*, 281–83.

³⁸⁹ Hume, *Early*, 147.

³⁹⁰ Kim, *Stewardship*, 93.

³⁹¹ Kim, *Stewardship*, 231.

Capper argues that what we see in Jesus' followers in the gospels and in Acts are forms of virtuoso religion, with a similar framework to that seen in the Essene and Qumran communities.³⁹² In this model, there are two standards for those who are followers of Jesus.³⁹³ Those who are in the travelling group³⁹⁴ are required to give up everything as they learn about using spiritual power³⁹⁵ and take on a calling involving teaching and authority.³⁹⁶ This was partly to give moral legitimacy,³⁹⁷ so that they could speak incisively into the lives of others. Those 'not called to wield spiritual authority'³⁹⁸ had private property, but practised hospitality and generosity.³⁹⁹ These two forms of discipleship could explain the situation with Ananias and Sapphira.⁴⁰⁰ Capper argues that in placing the proceeds at the feet of the apostles, Ananias and Sapphira are signifying their desire to become members of the virtuoso group. Capper hypothesizes that as the early church grows, the gospel spreads to new groups who are 'not incorporated into the central property-sharing group',⁴⁰¹ but that the sharing seen in the early summaries continues with the presence of peripatetic missionaries who renounce possessions and who were supported by others.⁴⁰²

While we agree that the expansion of the church brought changes to the way that possessions were shared, Capper's model of virtuoso religion relies on Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira bringing all that they have to the common fund and, as we have commented earlier, this is not necessarily the case. Also the model in the gospels⁴⁰³ is that those who become part of the travelling group leave what they have, as opposed to necessarily putting it into the common pot. The models presented in the gospels and Acts seem more varied than simply a virtuoso and a non-virtuoso group: people give and contribute in different ways, not simply in two ways. For example, there are women who travel with and contribute to the common purse while others leave their possessions to follow.⁴⁰⁴

³⁹² Capper, 'Jesus,' 72.

³⁹³ Capper, 'Jesus,' 63.

³⁹⁴ Capper, 'Jesus,' 64.

³⁹⁵ Capper, 'Jesus,' 68.

³⁹⁶ Capper, 'Jesus,' 71.

³⁹⁷ Capper, 'Jesus,' 73.

³⁹⁸ Capper, 'Jesus,' 73.

³⁹⁹ Capper, 'Jesus,' 73.

⁴⁰⁰ Capper, 'Jesus,' 78.

⁴⁰¹ Capper, 'Jesus,' 78.

⁴⁰² Capper, 'Jesus,' 76, 79.

⁴⁰³ See §2.1.2.1.

⁴⁰⁴ See §2.1.2.3.

Kim also suggests that we see two kinds of disciple:⁴⁰⁵ itinerant⁴⁰⁶ and sedentary.⁴⁰⁷ Kim argues that Luke has a particular interest in the sedentary disciple.⁴⁰⁸ In such sedentary discipleship, and for Luke in general, the emphasis is not on renunciation, but on the right use of wealth.⁴⁰⁹ Kim argues that Luke's repeated use of the master-servant relationships⁴¹⁰ and stewards⁴¹¹ provide a motif for sedentary disciples (and particularly for the rich within Luke's community⁴¹²) to use in how they approach possessions.⁴¹³ Kim argues that the fund in Acts 2 and 4 is used to support widows, and church leaders who had left their jobs. While it is likely that the fund was used to support these two groups, it is not clear that it is only these two groups. In both 2.45 and 4.35, those who receive are described much more generally as those in need. Also giving, or at least holding in common does not seem to be specifically limited to the rich. Kim's suggestion of the stewardship motif is helpful in how we understand what Luke is communicating through his gospel and Acts. However in the summaries, relying solely on this motif or interpretative matrix would ignore many of the elements within the text. It is to examining the details of the example presented in the early chapters of Acts that we now turn.

First, the example provided is not static, but one where the changing situation leads to changing practice. In 2.45, it is those who sell their possessions who distribute to those in need, while once the community is larger, the proceeds of sales are brought to the feet of the apostles and the proceeds then appear to be distributed from a central point (4.35). Then when the group grows further and issues arise in the daily distribution, men are appointed to new positions for the task (6.3).

Secondly, it is an example that occurs in very particular circumstances, in a society where there was already the example of the Essenes, in Jerusalem where there would have been higher numbers of those in need, and shortly after the crucifixion and resurrection, when there would have been Galilean followers of Jesus who were away from their livelihoods and support structures.

⁴⁰⁵ Kim, *Stewardship*, 100.

⁴⁰⁶ Kim, *Stewardship*, 100.

⁴⁰⁷ Kim, *Stewardship*, 102.

⁴⁰⁸ Kim, *Stewardship*, 109.

⁴⁰⁹ Kim, *Stewardship*, 109.

⁴¹⁰ Kim, *Stewardship*, 128.

⁴¹¹ Kim, *Stewardship*, 130.

⁴¹² Kim, *Stewardship*, 109.

⁴¹³ Kim, *Stewardship*, 130.

Thirdly, the sharing in the summary passages is linked to the presence of God's grace and the Holy Spirit. Both summaries follow the believers being filled with the Holy Spirit (2.1-4; 4.31) and the second summary describes the grace among them (4.33). This leads Klauck to comment 'Lukas versteht die Gütergemeinschaft als sichtbares Werk des Geistes, der in der Gemeinde wirkt.'⁴¹⁴

Fourthly, this work of the Spirit leads to spiritual unity, where the believers are together and of one mind and heart, viewing their possessions in common and not claiming private ownership. Dupont argues that there is a virtuous circle whereby:

Union of hearts and souls is a prior condition among Christians which impels them to pool their possessions. Yet sharing their goods also facilitates the full development of growing union of souls. Thus union of souls is at once the cause and the effect of an attitude by reason of which each individual considers his goods as belonging to all.⁴¹⁵

Thus, fifthly, the community see their possessions as at the disposal of one another, or held together with others, and therefore are ready to respond to need, by selling possessions or property and distributing it (2.45).

Sixthly, the community sees the care of those in need and eating together as key. One of the four key things they devote themselves to in 2.42 is sharing food as they break bread. We then see how there is daily distribution of food in Acts 6.1-6 and the way that it is such an important issue when some members are being overlooked, that the apostles call the whole community together.

Seventhly, the sharing of possessions in this way is voluntary, but there are also assumptions about it. Peter can ask questions which make it clear that Ananias and Sapphira had a choice about what they did with their property (5.4), but there was an assumption that they had given the whole of the proceeds to the group in the way they gave. Capper argues that, in giving in this way, Ananias and Sapphira are joining the common purse,⁴¹⁶ but from the summaries it would appear possible for people to be part of the common purse without necessarily selling land and giving it into the fund; for not claiming private ownership precedes the selling of specific pieces of land, which is ongoing and occurs when need arises.

Eighthly, the processes the community develops cut against patronage, for by bringing the proceeds to the apostles' feet, those who sell are no longer in a position

⁴¹⁴ Klauck, 'Gütergemeinschaft,' 74.

⁴¹⁵ Dupont, *Salvation*, 101.

⁴¹⁶ Capper, 'Community,' 120.

to make individuals who receive beholden to them as patrons. Similarly in Acts 6 the community may be choosing to increase the diversity of those in leadership.

3.2.3. *Parallels in the Surrounding Culture*

3.2.3.1. *Jewish Almsgiving Practice*

In Acts 4.34, Luke picks up the language of Deuteronomy 15.4 and indicates that the early church enjoys God's blessing⁴¹⁷ and fulfils the OT law of caring for those in need. Deuteronomy 15.7-11 goes on to point to giving alms and lending. Jeremias argues that some of the early church practices were modelled on the Jewish practice of *הפוק* and *המחוי*.⁴¹⁸ In this next section, we consider what evidence we have for first century Jewish practice with regard to tithing and almsgiving and how this compares to the example we have found in the Acts summaries.

Tithing and almsgiving were key parts of Jewish life. Part of the tithe went to those in need.⁴¹⁹ The third tithe was every third year and was given to the poor (Deut 14.27-29, Josephus *Ant.* 4.240).

This concern for those in need can be seen in Tobit where he recounts many acts of charity (1.16), notably to give food and clothing and to care for burial (1.17, 2.2-3, 4, 4.16). Tobit also provides several exhortations to give alms (4.7-11; 12.8-9; 14.8-9).

The Mishnah shows this concern continued in the post-70 CE era, for example *b. Gittin* 7b: 'Mar Zuṭra said: Even a poor man who himself subsists on charity should give charity'.

There is also evidence of more organised forms of almsgiving to the poor, for example the Chamber of Secrets where individuals could contribute and money was giving out of it for the 'poor of good family' (*m. Shek.* 5.6). In *m. Peah* 8.7 there is reference to *המחוי* and *קופה*, which Jeremias argued influenced early Christian practice.⁴²⁰ The *המחוי* involved more regular provision, with the stipulation that 'If a man has food enough for two meals he may not take aught from the [Paupers'] Dish'. The *קופה* seems to have involved a more weekly provision as if the person has 'enough for fourteen meals he may not take aught from the [Poor]-Fund' (*m. Peah* 8.7). This fund was 'collected by two and distributed by three' (*m. Peah* 8.7). Schürer suggests that the *המחוי* was available to any poor person on a daily basis and

⁴¹⁷ Johnson, *Function*, 200.

⁴¹⁸ Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 131.

⁴¹⁹ Sanders, *Judaism*, 147-8.

⁴²⁰ Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 131.

that קופה was distributed weekly to those who were known and regularly in need.⁴²¹

However Seccombe argues that there is no evidence that this distribution occurred before the destruction of the Second Temple.⁴²² For example, *m. Pesah* 10.1 stipulates that those who are poor should be provided with what they need for Passover and that it should be not less than ‘four cups of wine to drink, even if it is from the [Paupers’] Dish’. Jeremias argues that ‘it can only refer to the time when the Passover was still celebrated in Jerusalem’.⁴²³ However, Seccombe argues that this is not necessarily the case as the ‘Minhah Service’ did not ‘cease at the destruction of the Temple’⁴²⁴ and that *m. Pesah*. 10.1 gives instructions about practice as opposed to describing ‘what once happened in the Temple’.⁴²⁵ Instone-Brewer argues that while the initial phrase of *m. Pesah*. 10.1 may predate 70 CE, the mention of the four cups ‘suggests that the end of this tradition is post-70 because the fourth cup probably did not become institutionalized till after 70 CE’.⁴²⁶ However Instone-Brewer suggests that giving to those in need at Passover may have happened on a more ad hoc basis prior to 70 CE.⁴²⁷

As well as arguing against the evidence that Jeremias presents, Seccombe also points to the example of a woman who is found ‘picking barley grains in the dung of Arab cattle’ (*b. Ket. 66b*). He argues that this is unlikely to have happened if there was organised poor relief.⁴²⁸ While Seccombe presumes that the Chamber of Secrets did happen, he argues that the description of those who receive ‘looks suspiciously selective’.⁴²⁹ While Seccombe’s arguments do indicate that the practice of תמחוי and קופה is unlikely to have been fully developed and functional during NT times, they do not disprove the existence of embryonic forms similar to the idea of the תמחוי and קופה. Thus in comparing the practice of the early church to contemporary Jewish practice, we will allow for an embryonic form of the תמחוי and קופה to be developing in NT times.

⁴²¹ Schürer, Vermes, Millar and Black, *History*, 2:437,

⁴²² David Seccombe, ‘Was there Organized Charity in Jerusalem before the Christians?’, *JTS* n.s. 29 (1978) 140-143.

⁴²³ Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 133.

⁴²⁴ Seccombe, ‘Charity,’ 141.

⁴²⁵ Seccombe, ‘Charity,’ 141.

⁴²⁶ David Instone-Brewer, *Feasts and Sabbaths: Passover and Atonement*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011, 175.

⁴²⁷ Instone-Brewer, *Feasts*, 175.

⁴²⁸ Seccombe, ‘Charity,’ 142.

⁴²⁹ Seccombe, ‘Charity,’ 141.

So how does Jewish almsgiving compare with Luke's portrayal of the early church in the summary passages? Both Jewish practice and the summaries have a strong concern for those in need.

There is also some similarity between the διακονεῖν τραπέζαις in Acts 6.3 and the תמחור in that both involve daily provision.

However there are also differences. First, the descriptions of almsgivings tend to focus on the needs of the poor in the Jewish practice as opposed to the spiritual unity that we find in the summary passages. Secondly, as Capper points out, if the early church was following the Jewish model, we might expect to find weekly as opposed to daily provision.⁴³⁰ Thirdly, while Tobit sends his son to bring someone to eat with him (Tobit 2.2-3), there is not the same focus on eating together in the Jewish almsgiving as there is in the first summary passage.

3.2.3.2. *Qumran and the Essenes*

Capper suggests that the practice of the early church was analogous to and influenced by the Qumran and Essene communities.⁴³¹ We have argued that Jesus and his disciples would probably have come across Essenes in their travels or at least known about them.⁴³² The same arguments (Josephus and Philo's knowledge and description of their spread⁴³³ and their presence on the south-west hill of Jerusalem in the same quarter as some of the early church⁴³⁴) hold for the early church. It is probable that the early church would have been aware of their presence and practice.⁴³⁵ Capper goes on to suggest that many of the early Christian converts were Essenes⁴³⁶ and 'may have brought into the Jerusalem Church the language and procedures of Essene property-sharing'.⁴³⁷ As noted in §2.2.2.2, this is difficult to prove or disprove, however Klauck's conclusion seems likely: 'Daß die Urgemeinde die essenisch-qumranischen Formen der Gütergemeinschaft kannte, halte ich für höchstwahrscheinlich.'⁴³⁸

When we look at the Qumran / Essene communities alongside early church practice, we can identify some similarities, but there are also differences. The

⁴³⁰ Capper, 'Palestinianian,' 351.

⁴³¹ Capper, 'Palestinianian,' 356; Capper, 'Community,' 120-121.

⁴³² See §2.2.2.2.

⁴³³ Josephus: *Ant.* 18.20-21, *J.W.* 2.12-15; Philo: *Hypoth.* 11.1, *Good Person* 75.

⁴³⁴ Capper, 'Palestinianian,' 334.

⁴³⁵ Riesner, 'Jesus,' 202-15.

⁴³⁶ Capper, 'Community,' 120.

⁴³⁷ Capper, 'Reciprocity,' 2.

⁴³⁸ Klauck, 'Gütergemeinschaft,' 78.

comparison is complicated by the diversity of practice in the evidence we have about the Essenes. There are more straightforward parallels with the descriptions in some of the secondary evidence about the Essenes in towns and villages. Both communities involve contributions into a fund, which is then used for provision (*Hypoth.* 10.10) and both involve eating together⁴³⁹ (*Hypoth.* 10.10–11), as well as caring for those in need (*Hypoth.* 11.13). Capper also argues that there are parallels between the two forms of Essenism and early church community. He equates the community in Acts 2 and 4 with the community described in 1QS and then the Hellenist community with that described in CD. However as we have seen in our examination of the text, the distinctions between the community in Acts 2 and 4 and the Hellenist community of Acts 6 are not so clear-cut.

The sharing in both the Essene community and the early church community involves collections and provision; however there are some differences in how that collection and provision is made and the motivation of the two communities is also different. Hargreaves argues that the sharing amongst the Essenes is by rule rather than individual choice,⁴⁴⁰ and Fitzmyer that it is more structured.⁴⁴¹ While there were expectations in the way the early community shared, Luke does not include rules and regulations for how possessions are handed over. However the sharing does appear to be more than simply individual choice. Individuals appear to choose when to sell (and to retain the right of disposal of their property), but the expectation of holding in common precedes the selling of property.

The selling and giving in the early church community is ongoing in response to need, whereas that amongst the Essenes is either total (but staged) or daily through wages. This means that for the early church community, not everyone may have contributed to the common fund even though they held everything in common. Kim goes as far as to limit the common fund to ‘benevolent contributions of the wealthy towards the poor neighbours’⁴⁴² though this does not take full account of the idea of holding in common. In contrast, in the Qumran community everything was handed over to be controlled centrally and in the Essene communities in towns, everyone contributed a certain amount on a regular basis. So while the early church community had a greater sense of spiritual unity and identity and arguably a sense that all they had belonged to the others within the

⁴³⁹ Kim, *Stewardship*, 251.

⁴⁴⁰ Hargreaves, *Guide*, 31.

⁴⁴¹ Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 270.

⁴⁴² Kim, *Stewardship*, 252.

group, this did not mean that each person necessarily contributed into the fund in the same way. Capper suggests that daily contributions may have occurred in the early church, but that as they would have been less noticeable Luke may not have heard of them.⁴⁴³

Additionally, for the community at Qumran at least, the purpose of the sharing seems quite different. Kim argues that the sharing at Qumran was ‘a means of maintaining such an isolated and self-supporting community, but as it was practised in the Jerusalem community one aspect of it was a means of helping the poor in the community in relieving them of their hunger.’⁴⁴⁴

So while there are similarities, particularly with the Essenes who lived in towns, there are differences. Luke focuses more on the unity and identity of the early believers and their practice of sharing, in comparison with the focus in the DSS literature on the need for holiness and the rules and regulations which dictate the practice of the Essenes.

3.2.3.3. *Pythagoras and the Community at Croton*

Josephus makes the comparison between the Essenes and the Pythagorean community (*Ant.* 15.371) and Grant compares the sharing of possessions in the Pythagorean community with that of the early church in Acts.⁴⁴⁵ This section will consider the evidence about the community at Magna Croton, whether or not the early church is likely to have known about it and what similarities and differences the two communities have. The two main sources of information about the Pythagorean community are Porphyry’s (234–c.305 CE) *Life of Pythagoras* and Iamblichus’ *On the Pythagorean Life*. However Gillian Clark points out that Iamblichus writes in the context of ‘the pagan-Christian debate of the third and fourth centuries’⁴⁴⁶ and that it is difficult to tell how far back what he is describing goes and whether he is influenced by Christian practice or by Pythagoreans.⁴⁴⁷ Porphyry writes of Pythagoras that ‘His friends he loved exceedingly, being the first to declare that the goods of friends are common, and that a friend was another self’ (*Vit. Pyth.* 33). The Pythagoreans ‘held all property in common’ (*Vit. Pyth.* 20; *VP* 6.30). They had a staged entry to the community where potential was tested (*VP*

⁴⁴³ Capper, ‘Palestinian,’ 352.

⁴⁴⁴ Kim, *Stewardship*, 251.

⁴⁴⁵ Grant, *Christianity*, 100.

⁴⁴⁶ Gillian Clark, *Iamblichus: On the Pythagorean Life*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989, x.

⁴⁴⁷ Clark, *Iamblichus*, xviii.

17.71), and then they were ignored for three years before being silent for five years (VP 17.72). ‘During this time each one’s property was held in common, entrusted to particular students who were called “civil servants” and who managed the finances and made the rules’ (VP 17.72). At the end of the five years they either entered the inner circle or were sent away with double their initial property (VP 17.72–73).

There are a number of similarities in the descriptions of the Pythagorean community and the early church. Both are described as having their property in common and entrusting the property to particular people. There are also some interesting similarities that are not directly related to their sharing of possessions. Pythagoras is described as being perceived as godlike (VP 5.20) and he drew many to hear him (Vit. Pyth. 19). The community were expected to be ‘trustworthy without oaths’ (VP 9.47).

However there are also differences. The entry to the Pythagorean community is staged, with a possible exit route, which, while it involves the community forming a grave for the person leaving, also involves the person leaving with double what they came with. This is quite different from the community in Acts where there is no evidence of a staged entry, nor of an easy route to leave the community. Pythagoras drew the rich (Vit. Pyth. 19) and the community was one focused around philosophical learning (Vit. Pyth. 18–19). Some allowance is made for those who just come to study and do not become part of the perpetual community (VP 18.81) and the distinction is also made between Learners who were younger men with time to learn and Hearers, who were older with less time to learn and therefore were given instruction without the reasoning behind it (VP 18.88). While the Acts community was focused around the apostles’ teaching, they were not primarily a philosophical community, but rather a worshipping and praying one.

While Pythagoras’ teaching included instruction that one should not ‘renounce a friendship because of misfortune’ (VP 22.102), he also argued ‘It is upbringing which distinguishes humans from beasts, Greeks from foreigners, free men from household slaves, and philosophers from ordinary people’ (VP 8.44). In contrast the Acts community shows richer and poorer together: there are those who have lands or houses they can sell (4.34) and there are those who are in need and receive (2.46). There is little about the Pythagoreans eating together, apart from an instruction that ‘not more than ten people ate together’ (VP 21.98), while eating together was a key part of the early believers’ practice (2.42, 46). There is

also no evidence that the Pythagoreans were particularly concerned for the poor or for those in need.

While Josephus does compare the Essenes to the Pythagoreans (*Ant.* 15.371), Josephus is likely to have travelled and read more widely than some early believers. Our other sources on the Pythagoreans are third and fourth century texts and it does not seem very likely that most of the early believers would have known much about Pythagoras or the Pythagoreans.

So while there are a couple of similarities, there are significant differences and it is also unclear that the early church would have known about the Pythagorean community, and, even if they did, that they would have been an influence on the thought or practice of the early believers.

3.2.4. Conclusion

The early chapters of Acts describe a community in a particular situation that shares possessions. It is a community in the early days of development, where rapid growth and increasing persecution change the context in which the community lives and operates, which leads to changing practice. The sharing is linked to God's grace, and the presence of the Holy Spirit which leads to unity amongst the community. All they have is held in common, yet not held communally. So, while private property in name continues, possessions are both seen as common, but also sold and used as needs arise within the community. Sharing is voluntary, for each person's possessions are in their control, but with assumptions, as the community operated on the basis that possessions were common. The process by which possessions were sold and distributed, with the proceeds being laid at the apostles' feet, may have worked against individuals promoting patron-client relationships within the community.

Luke echoes both OT and Graeco-Roman language and ideas in his description of the community, and there are some parallels with quite a wide range of communities and practices including Jewish almsgiving, the Essenes / Qumran, and the Pythagoreans. Both the Acts example and Jewish almsgiving show concern for the poor and those in need, and include provision of food. The Essene / Qumran example shows similarities in sharing possessions, concern for the poor, and eating together. The Pythagorean community shows similarities in property being held in common and entrusted to particular people. However there are also significant distinctives.

First, the community in the early chapters of Acts is drawn from a variety of backgrounds rather than one social class (in comparison with the Greek friendship ideals and the Pythagoreans). In addition there is no indication of reciprocity being expected for the giving which takes place, which is the case in Greek friendship ideals. Luke does not use the word φίλος but instead talks of πιστευσάντες / πιστεύοντες, indicating that the community is not based on the members being friends (or of the same status or background), but rather it is based in their belief in and following of Jesus.

Secondly, the example of sharing is one where eating together is seen as important. This is evidenced in the way those in need are provided for through daily communal meals rather than the weekly provision seen in the קופה.

Thirdly, there is a greater emphasis on God's grace and the presence of the Holy Spirit – on the unity of the community and their practice of sharing, rather than the rules and regulations of how to share seen in the Essene / Qumran comparator.

Fourthly, the example is one where the sharing / giving is more of an ongoing process of selling in response to need, as opposed to all possessions being sold and pooled. There is also more flexibility in how the believers contribute to the fund in Acts 2 and 4 compared to either the Essenes / Qumran or the Pythagoreans.

The early church brought together those with some wealth and those in need and was based around their shared belief in Jesus, in his death and resurrection and the presence of the Holy Spirit uniting them.

3.3. The Community in Antioch: Committed Relationship, Corporate Responsibility and Careful Stewardship

3.3.1. The Texts

3.3.1.1. Acts 11.27-30

Acts 11.27-30 follows the beginning of the move of the gospel to the Gentiles. This move is seen both in the account of Cornelius in Caesarea in Acts 10 and 11.1-18, and the account of the men of Cyprus and Cyrene in Antioch in 11.19-21.⁴⁴⁸ In

⁴⁴⁸ In 11.20 the use of Ἑλληνιστάς or in certain manuscripts Ἑλλήνας leaves a lack of clarity about who the author is referring to, particularly given Josephus' account of the Jewish community in Antioch (*J.W.* 7.43-5), who may have spoken Greek and which Josephus notes attracted Greeks (*J.W.* 7.45). It could be Greek speaking Jews, Greek speaking God-fearers (like Cornelius in Acts 10.2) or Greeks. However the contrast with the previous verse where 'they spoke to no one except Jews' argues that whichever of the words is used, the author does indeed intend to indicate that they

11.19–26, following the persecution after Stephen’s death, the believers are scattered and a number come to Antioch and proclaim the Lord Jesus and ‘a great number’ become believers. The church in Jerusalem, on hearing the news, sends Barnabas to Antioch. He rejoices in God’s grace and fetches Saul to come and teach in Antioch with him. It is into this context that the prophets come down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

The account begins with prophets coming down from Jerusalem to Antioch.⁴⁴⁹ One of the group of prophets, Agabus, then prophesies the coming of a famine: λιμὸν μεγάλην μέλλειν ἔσεσθαι ἐφ’ ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην (11.28). There is significant discussion as to the nature of this prophecy and its fulfilment. The prophecy refers to ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην which would seem to indicate the whole world, or at least the whole inhabited world, however as Winter points out a wide range of vocabulary is used to indicate famine or food shortage and it is not easy to tell from the different words the severity or extent of the food shortage.⁴⁵⁰

While Luke uses οἰκουμένην, which Johnson argues is generally used to denote the inhabited world, Johnson asserts that Luke’s other uses of οἰκουμένην, which occur in Luke 2.1 and Luke 4.5, both indicate less than the whole world.⁴⁵¹ This is certainly the case in Luke 2.1, where the reference is presumably the extent of the Roman Empire at the time, but the reference in Luke 4.5, while practically difficult to conceive, would seem to intend to point to the whole world.

An inscription of 163 CE speaks of a famine which κόσμον ἐπέσχε[θ]ε πάντα (‘spread over all the world’),⁴⁵² which suggests a widespread if not worldwide famine. However while the inscription talks about the severity of the famine, its σαρκοβόρος (flesh eating) nature and how βούβρωστις κατά γαῖαν (ravenous appetite across the earth), the cattle are saved by being moved elsewhere which would suggest that while the famine might have spread over an area, it was not

were Gentiles and not simply Greek speaking Jews. Witherington also notes the use of πολὺς τε ἀριθμός and argues that it points to ‘a mixed group, certainly not just Jews’ because it indicates a large number (Witherington, *Acts*, 371). This would fit with Josephus’ comment that Antioch was both ‘the capital of Syria’ and ‘ranks third among the cities of the Roman world’ (*J.W.* 3.29), which would indicate a cosmopolitan make up.

⁴⁴⁹ While Haenchen queries whether travelling prophets in groups existed at this time, his argument is based on practice at the end of the first century (Haenchen, *Acts*, 376) and the practice of how prophets travelled in the middle of the first century would seem to be pertinent in assessing the historicity of the account.

⁴⁵⁰ Bruce W. Winter, ‘Acts and Food Shortages,’ in David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, ed. *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, 59–78, citing 62.

⁴⁵¹ Johnson, *Acts*, 205.

⁴⁵² Winter, ‘Acts,’ 66.

universal.⁴⁵³ Also, Winter notes that thus far no other evidence for famine in 163 CE has been found,⁴⁵⁴ which thus gives an example of using words which might suggest a widespread famine for one affecting a region.

In addition, Winter notes the possibility of using worldwide with a sense of poetic exaggeration.⁴⁵⁵ Gapp hypothesises that sometimes when a population experienced famines they ‘sometimes imagined that other countries experienced the same distress, although they had definite knowledge only of local conditions.’⁴⁵⁶

Thus, while ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην could point to the whole world, or at least the whole known world, it could also be used of a region, and allowing for poetic exaggeration to a smaller area.

Similarly, λιμός can have a range of meanings and may refer to a severe famine, or to the existence of hunger or shortage in an area, and these may have a range of causes. Garnsey in his study on famine distinguishes between famine, where there is an increase in starvation and mortality, and food crises, where there was hunger bordering on starvation and food prices were affected.⁴⁵⁷ He argues that ‘famines were rare, but that subsistence crises falling short of famine were common.’⁴⁵⁸ However he also notes that ‘it cannot be assumed that *fames* or *limos* are always employed in the narrow sense of famine as opposed to hunger.’⁴⁵⁹

Grain shortages, and thus food crises or famine, could arise from a number of different causes: crop failure, the need for transportation to cities where the surrounding area could not produce enough grain and difficulties in transportation – particularly by sea, and the need to supply Rome.⁴⁶⁰

Rome as the capital city, with political importance, took priority in terms of grain distribution and had a permanent administration to coordinate the distribution of grain.⁴⁶¹ Thus if Rome was short of grain, we can presume a widespread shortage in the Empire, or key disruption to transportation to Rome. Within the Empire, Egypt was one of the main grain producing areas and a

⁴⁵³ Philippe Le Bas and William Henry Waddington, *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines recueillies en Asie Mineure*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972, no1192. Winter, ‘Acts,’ 66.

⁴⁵⁴ Winter, ‘Acts,’ 66–67.

⁴⁵⁵ Winter, ‘Acts,’ 67; also Lake and Cadbury, *Acts*, 4:131.

⁴⁵⁶ Kenneth Sperber Gapp, ‘The Universal Famine under Claudius,’ *HTR* 28 (1935) 258–65, citing 263.

⁴⁵⁷ Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Greco-Roman World. Responses to Risk and Crisis*, Cambridge: CUP, 1988, 6, 24.

⁴⁵⁸ Garnsey, *Famine*, 6.

⁴⁵⁹ Garnsey, *Famine*, 19.

⁴⁶⁰ Winter, ‘Acts,’ 61.

⁴⁶¹ Winter, ‘Acts,’ 72.

shortage there led to shortages elsewhere. Witherington adds that shortage of grain or famine always affects the poor disproportionately as there is rarely a complete absence of food, rather the shortage of food pushes the price up,⁴⁶² thus famine within an area affects some people and not others.

So the use of οἰκουμένην and λιμόν could refer to widespread food shortages and increased prices, caused by poor harvests in particular areas.

We now turn to the evidence of famines or grain shortages in Judaea and more widely in the Roman Empire and we do not find a shortage of references. Josephus reports how at the time of the visit of Helena,⁴⁶³ the mother of Izates, to Jerusalem, λιμοῦ γάρ αὐτῶν τὴν πόλιν κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἐκεῖνον πιεζοῦντος καὶ πολλῶν ὑπ' ἐνδείας ἀναλωμάτων φθειρομένων (for at that time the city was hard pressed by famine and many were perishing from want of money to purchase what they needed)(*Ant.* 20.51). Earlier Josephus refers to a severe famine, possibly the same one under Claudius. He comments on the lack of wheat and its price (*Ant.* 3.320–21). Orosius refers to the same famine and places it during the fourth year of Claudius' reign and notes that it affected the whole of Syria (*Hist.* 7.6). Therefore Krodel argues that 'Judea suffered hard times and food shortages during A.D. 46 to 48',⁴⁶⁴ but asserts that there was no worldwide famine. Conzelmann and Gaventa support this conclusion, while Haenchen argues for local famines, but no worldwide famine.⁴⁶⁵

However there are references to famines during the reign of Claudius which affect other areas in the empire. Tacitus reports a shortage of corn resulting in famine in Rome, noting that 'the capital had provisions for fifteen days, no more' (*Ann.* 12.43) and that due to the food shortage Claudius was hounded in the Forum (*Ann.* 12.43, also Suetonius *Clau.* 18.2). Given the priority of transporting grain to Rome, this would suggest a shortage elsewhere as well.

There is also evidence of crop failure and food shortages in Egypt. Pliny records about the Nile 'If it has not risen more than 18 feet, there is certain to be a famine, and likewise if it has exceeded 24 feet; for it retires more slowly in proportion as it has risen in greater flood, and prevents the sowing of seed' (*Nat.* 18.168). He also records 'The largest rise up to date was one of 27 feet in the

⁴⁶² Witherington, *Acts*, 372.

⁴⁶³ Josephus sets this visit after the time of Herod Agrippa's death (*Ant.* 20.1) and notes that Helena and Izates convert to Judaism (*Ant.* 20.17,38).

⁴⁶⁴ Krodel, *Acts*, 209.

⁴⁶⁵ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 90; Gaventa, *Acts*, 180; Haenchen, *Acts*, 62; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 482; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 327.

principate of Claudius' (*Nat.* 5.58), which points to a famine in Egypt during the time of Claudius. *P. Mich.* 594 records high numbers of people owing poll, pig and dike tax in the village of Philadelphia in 45/46 CE, an increase in 46/47 and then a slight decrease in 47/48, which would suggest reduced crops or crop failure in 45–47.⁴⁶⁶ Witherington comments 'in terms of its effects one could well talk about an Empire-wide famine if there was a severe one in Egypt.'⁴⁶⁷ It may be that the crop failures in Egypt led to the recorded food crises in both Judaea and Rome.

In order to consider whether this is the case we need to look at the dates of the recorded crises in Judaea and Rome, while bearing in mind that prices could rise prior to a bad harvest, if it was predicted and grain was hoarded to try and gain higher prices.⁴⁶⁸ The evidence for Egypt shows issues particularly in years 45–47 CE. When we look at Josephus' evidence, Helena's visit occurs during the procuratorship of Tiberius Alexander, which suggests either 46 or 47 CE.⁴⁶⁹ Gapp argues that as Helena purchased grain from Egypt, the food supply in Egypt was improving as the situation in Judaea worsened.⁴⁷⁰ The situation in Rome seems to have occurred later still. However there are discrepancies in the evidence as to the exact year.⁴⁷¹ Tacitus indicates it was the beginning of Claudius' eleventh year (*Ann.* 12.43), Orosius reports two famines: one in Syria in the fourth year of Claudius' reign and another in Rome in the tenth year of his reign (*Hist.* 7.6), which would place the most difficult period in 44 or 50–51 CE, which could either indicate two separate times of need or inaccuracies in one of the accounts. Eusebius simply notes that a famine took place in the time of Claudius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.8–12).

These references indicate widespread food shortages across the Empire, during the reign of Claudius, particularly in the late 40s and early 50s CE. Hemer argues that famine 'was not a matter of widespread harvest failure and sudden crisis so much as an accumulation of local failures and difficulties which progressively priced the available supplies out of the reach of the poor before the rich were affected.'⁴⁷² While there may not be evidence for a definite worldwide famine during a particular year, the evidence does suggest food crises across a wide area of the

⁴⁶⁶ Gerald M. Browne, *Documentary Papyri from the Michigan Collection*, Toronto: Hakkert, 1970, 64–67.

⁴⁶⁷ Witherington, *Acts*, 373.

⁴⁶⁸ Gapp, 'Famine,' 260.

⁴⁶⁹ Gapp, 'Famine,' 260.

⁴⁷⁰ Gapp, 'Famine,' 262.

⁴⁷¹ Jacques Dupont, *Études sur les Actes des Apôtres*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1967, 163.

⁴⁷² Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989, 165.

known world over a relatively short period of time, which could have been considered as a widespread famine.

This suggests that despite the questions about the accuracy of the prophecy and its fulfilment, the account in Acts 11 correlates with wider historical evidence about widespread food shortages. However Acts 12 reports that around the time of Barnabas and Saul being sent to Jerusalem, King Herod persecuted members of the church and arrested Peter (12.1–3). Subsequently Herod died (12.23). This creates some issues for dating as Herod died in 44 CE and most of our evidence of famine in Judaea is later than this. Luke may have misplaced the timing of the visit to Jerusalem (the question of correlating the Acts and Galatians accounts will be addressed later) and the visit of Saul and Barnabas may actually have taken place during the 45–47 CE famine in Jerusalem. Alternatively there may have been two separate famines, one referred to by Luke and one by Josephus. However this seems less likely as there does not seem to be much other evidence of an earlier famine.

In addition, while Luke does place his account of Herod's death between the prophecy and Saul and Barnabas' return, he introduces the section on the church in Jerusalem and Herod's death with the words: Κατ' ἐκείνον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν (12.1) and is not specific about which time he is referring back to: the time of the days when the prophets visited Antioch (11.27), the time of men from Cyprus and Cyrene preaching about Jesus in Antioch (11.20) or at some point in between the two. It may be that 11.19–30 and 12.1–24 parallel one another during a period of over a year (for once Saul comes to Antioch, he teaches for ἐνιαυτὸν ὅλον [11.26]), the one chapter recording events in Antioch, the other events in Jerusalem, which could place the visit by Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem after the death of Herod, potentially near the beginning of the famine in 45 CE.

So, while there are still some questions about dates, there is evidence of widespread famine in the region in the late 40s, which could correlate with Agabus' prediction of λιμὸν μεγάλην μέλλειν ἔσεσθαι ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην (11.28). As Pervo points out, this raises the question of why the believers in Antioch responded to the prediction of a widespread famine by collecting and sending relief to Judaea, as opposed to any of the other areas affected,⁴⁷³ and instead of providing for themselves. Additionally, Dunn asks why the Jerusalem church would be seen as needing help,⁴⁷⁴ and Haenchen queries why the church in Antioch would want to

⁴⁷³ Pervo, *Acts*, 296.

⁴⁷⁴ Dunn, *Acts*, 157.

help the church in Jerusalem as he hypothesises a break between the remaining church in Jerusalem and the ‘Hellenistic fugitives’,⁴⁷⁵ with the church in Antioch being independent.⁴⁷⁶ However, as Walton points out, there is a lack of evidence for the Hellenists and Hebrews having distinct theologies.⁴⁷⁷ One could equally expect the Diaspora Jews to be more conservative⁴⁷⁸ (given that they had chosen to travel and settle in Jerusalem) instead of expecting them to be more liberal about the temple. In addition, Luke uses Ἑλληνιστῆς in a number of ways: for believers (6.1), for those who are probably Jews but not believers (9.29) and for those as we have seen earlier who are not Jews (11.20),⁴⁷⁹ therefore it is unclear whether there is such a significant rift between the Hebrews and the Hellenists. In 6.1, the believers in Jerusalem address the issue of the Hellenist widows being overlooked together. Therefore there does not seem sufficient evidence for a Jerusalem–Antioch (Hebrew–Hellenist) split which would preclude the Antiochenes seeking to help those in Jerusalem.⁴⁸⁰

There are also several reasons why the Antiochenes may have focussed on the brothers in Judaea as the recipients of the relief fund. First, there was an existing link to Judaea and to Jerusalem in particular. It was some of those who had fled from Judaea, who had evangelised Antioch. As Calvin notes the brothers in Jerusalem were the ‘brothers from whom they had received the Gospel.’⁴⁸¹ So Jerusalem was their founding or mother church,⁴⁸² and the ‘Antiochian community ... owed its very existence to refugees from Jerusalem.’⁴⁸³ Johnson and Conzelmann both note the importance for Luke of showing that there is continuity with Jerusalem and Jerusalem’s centrality in the growth of the gospel.⁴⁸⁴ However

⁴⁷⁵ Haenchen, *Acts*, 377.

⁴⁷⁶ Haenchen, *Acts*, 379.

⁴⁷⁷ Steve Walton, ‘How Mighty a Minority were the Hellenists?’, in Michael F. Bird and Jason Maston, eds, *Earliest Christian History*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012, 305–328, citing 305.

⁴⁷⁸ Walton, ‘Minority,’ 207.

⁴⁷⁹ Walton, ‘Minority,’ 202.

⁴⁸⁰ Even if there were a split and the Antiochene church then chose to give to the Judean church, it could indicate the importance the Antiochene church placed on the relationship between the communities. However, Luke’s account suggests an existing and ongoing relationship between the two church communities.

⁴⁸¹ John Calvin, *Acts*, Wheaton: Crossway, 1995, 196.

⁴⁸² Barrett, *Acts*, 1:558.

⁴⁸³ Krodel, *Acts*, 210.

⁴⁸⁴ Johnson, *Acts*, 207; Conzelmann, *Acts*, xlii–xliii. For Luke, Jerusalem is where his gospel starts (Luke 1.5–25), it is where Jesus journeys to (Luke 9.51; 17.22) and it is where the gospel ends (Luke 24.50–53). Jerusalem is also where Acts begins (Acts 1–7) and where the council takes place to decide about Gentiles who believe the good news (Acts 15.1–21). It is from Jerusalem that Barnabas

the text goes beyond simply showing continuity or centrality, it shows ongoing relationship: a relationship that starts with the men of Cyprus and Cyrene (11.20), and continues with the sending of Barnabas (11.22) and the coming of the prophets (11.27).

It is these prophets, including Agabus, who have come from Jerusalem, and who therefore are in an ideal situation to report the situation of the believers there and in Judaea (as they would presumably have travelled through part of Judaea whether they travelled wholly by land or for some of the way by sea). In addition, the believers in Jerusalem and Judaea would not have been wholly unknown to the Christians in Antioch, for those who had initially scattered following the persecution and Barnabas would presumably have known some of them personally, and shared something of their experience in the community in Jerusalem.

Thus, some of the Antiochenes would have had personal relationships with the believers in Judaea and through the ongoing relationships and the arrival of the prophets would have had up to date insight into the economic situation and tensions in Jerusalem. Therefore they would have been aware of issues that potentially made the community in Jerusalem more vulnerable to food shortages. Cassidy notes the possibility of the practice of the common purse in Acts 2 and 4 depleting resources and creating need, but notes that Luke does not indicate this.⁴⁸⁵ However, many of Jesus' first disciples were Galilean, and therefore, when they were in Jerusalem they would have been away from their main occupation and thus may have found it more difficult to earn. This would also apply to any of those who had travelled to Jerusalem at Pentecost, became believers and stayed in Jerusalem. Both of these possibilities could have added to the vulnerability of the believers in Jerusalem.

Beyond issues within the church, Calvin notes a wider issue that 'Judea was impoverished by war and other disasters'.⁴⁸⁶ Thus, while Fiensy argues that the make up of the Jerusalem church was economically diverse reflecting the economic diversity of the city,⁴⁸⁷ such wider issues in Jerusalem and Judaea would have affected the Jerusalem church. These issues include: the large number of people

is sent out to investigate the reports about the church at Antioch (Acts 11.22) and where Paul returns and begins being tried (Acts 21.1–23.22).

⁴⁸⁵ Cassidy, *Society*, 29.

⁴⁸⁶ Calvin, *Acts*, 196.

⁴⁸⁷ Fiensy, 'Composition,' 226.

who returned from the Diaspora to Jerusalem in their old age,⁴⁸⁸ the confiscation of land by Herod the Great,⁴⁸⁹ the increase in the number of large land holdings,⁴⁹⁰ the greed of the high priestly families,⁴⁹¹ and high taxes and tithes.⁴⁹² In addition Jeremias notes that 47/48 CE was a Sabbath year,⁴⁹³ which would have exacerbated any difficulties from the previous years, if it were observed. As the Antiochene believers had an ongoing relationship with the Jerusalem church, it is likely they would have known that the Sabbath year was approaching and would create further food storages. Gapp also argues that Jerusalem would have been more severely affected than Antioch, because the expense of transporting grain to Jerusalem would be greater than transporting it to Antioch, which was a commercial centre.⁴⁹⁴

Thus, both because of their relationship with believers in Jerusalem and Judaea, and because of their knowledge of the challenges in Jerusalem and Palestine, it would seem a natural response for the Antiochene church to send relief to the believers in Judaea.

There is a certain degree of ambiguity about how the relief is collected and decided about. While in 11.29 it is clear that amounts are dependent on ability,⁴⁹⁵ καθὼς εὐπορεῖτο, and that there is an element of individual decision, ἕκαστος αὐτῶν, it is interesting to note that ὥρισαν is in the plural, not in the singular to match ἕκαστος.⁴⁹⁶ This indicates that there are individual contributions to the collection, but that it is seen as a corporate venture. As Haenchen observes, the length of the collecting is not noted.⁴⁹⁷ While the placement of the description of the collection would seem to indicate an immediate response to the prophecy, it could have taken place at the time of the prophecy or later on as they saw the prophecy being fulfilled.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁸⁸ S. E. Johnson, 'The Dead Sea Manual of Discipline and the Jerusalem Church of Acts,' in K. Stendahl, ed. *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, London: SCM, 1958, 129–42, citing 133.

⁴⁸⁹ Gerd Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992, 89–90.

⁴⁹⁰ S. Gujjarro, 'The Family in First-Century Galilee,' in H. Moxnes, ed. *Constructing Early Christian Families*, London: Routledge, 1997, 42–65, citing 43–46.

⁴⁹¹ Hengel, *Property*, 23. It should be noted that Hengel is reporting post-70 rabbis commenting on the pre-70 era and that they may have a particular take on the situation.

⁴⁹² Gujjarro, 'Family,' 44–45.

⁴⁹³ Joachim Jeremias, 'Sabbathjahr und neutestamentliche Chronologie,' *ZNW* 27 (1928) 98–103, citing 99.

⁴⁹⁴ Gapp, 'Famine,' 260.

⁴⁹⁵ With similarities to the giving according to ability espoused by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8.3.

⁴⁹⁶ Turner notes that ἕκαστος occurs more often in the NT with the correct singular verb (25 times) than with a plural verb (11 times) (Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963, 312).

⁴⁹⁷ Haenchen, *Acts*, 375.

⁴⁹⁸ Conzelmann, *Acts*, 91.

The relief fund is then sent to the brothers living in Judaea. It is sent to the elders via Barnabas and Saul. Marshall notes that this is the first mention of the elders in Jerusalem and suggests that the seven referred to in 6.1–6 may have become known as elders,⁴⁹⁹ while Blomberg suggests that the elders may have replaced the twelve and the deacons.⁵⁰⁰ In any case the account points to the fund being handed over to leaders of some kind in Judaea, as opposed to being distributed by Barnabas and Saul, and thus control of the money is handed over to the local leaders.

3.3.1.2. *Historical Questions – Acts 11, Acts 15, Galatians 2, and the Pauline Collection*

There is considerable discussion, and no easy answer, about how Acts 11 and 15 relate to Galatians 2. In addition, the question is raised about whether the gift that Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 and Romans 16 is the same as the relief fund in Acts 11. The discussion includes those who argue that Luke is historically inaccurate here: either in his placing of this visit, or in its existence as a separate visit from the more general collection or the Acts 15 visit. As we are considering the example of the gift of the Antiochene Christians to the believers in Jerusalem and are interested not just in Luke's portrayal, but also in whether the gift happened and how it compared to other ways of responding to famine, we will briefly consider some of the historical questions about the relationship between the Acts 11 visit, the Acts 15 visit, the Pauline collection and Paul's account in Galatians 2.

Johnson presumes that the Pauline collection and Acts 11 are referring to the same collection and that Luke is historically inaccurate,⁵⁰¹ while Bruce argues that the famine relief is not the same as the final visit with the collection (Romans 15.25).⁵⁰² The situation in Jerusalem and Palestine which created an increased need and the fact that there seem to be so many famines referred to under Claudius, suggests that there could well be a need for more than one trip with provisions or funds for the believers in Jerusalem / Judaea, and Jeremias suggests that Paul's experience of the 47/48 Sabbath year might have led to his desire to collect for 'eine ansehnliche Gabe' to take to Jerusalem in the light of the 54/55 Sabbath year.⁵⁰³ So

⁴⁹⁹ Marshall, *Acts*, 204.

⁵⁰⁰ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 171.

⁵⁰¹ Johnson, *Acts*, 208.

⁵⁰² Bruce, *Acts*, 275.

⁵⁰³ Jeremias, 'Sabbathjahr,' 102–3.

there seems to be no good reason why there would not have been more than one collection.

The main issue with regard to the relationship between Acts 11, Acts 15 and Gal 2 is that Paul claims, and indeed declares before God (Gal 1.9), that he has only been once to Jerusalem after his conversion (Gal 1.18 and presumably correlating to Acts 9.26–29), before his visit of Gal 2 where he discusses the issues about preaching the gospel to Gentiles and whether they need to be circumcised. If the Gal 2 visit relates to the council of Acts 15, it would not seem to allow for Paul visiting Jerusalem in Acts 11. There are three main options:

- **Acts 11, Acts 15 and Galatians 2 all refer to one visit.** Jeremias argues that Luke ‘hat die Kollektenreise versehentlich doppelt berichtet,’⁵⁰⁴ which Barrett suggests is because Luke is using two sources about the same event.⁵⁰⁵
- **Acts 15 is the same as the Galatians 2 visit.** Dibelius argues that Acts 11 does not refer to the conference and may be in the wrong place chronologically.⁵⁰⁶ Hengel argues for Gal 2 corresponding to the later Acts 15 visit for a number of reasons. First, the reference in Gal 2.2 to ‘I was not running, or had not run, in vain’ points to a later point in Paul’s ministry than Acts 11. Secondly, the reference in Gal 2.9 to ‘James and Cephas and John’ indicates that it is after James’ (brother of John) death as Hengel presumes the James in Galatians 2.9, is James, the brother of Jesus and that James the brother of John would have been mentioned before John, were he still living. Thus Hengel places Gal 2.9 after Acts 12.2.⁵⁰⁷ However if chapter 12 parallels chapter 11, the argument about James, John’s brother, would not necessarily hold, as Acts 12.2 could have taken place before Acts 11.27–30. Haenchen argues that the Acts 11 account cannot refer to Gal 2 because it does not fit easily with the reference to Paul’s desire to remember the poor (Gal 2.10) and he sees Acts 11 as a fusion of two traditions.⁵⁰⁸ Longenecker raises various problems with identifying Acts 15 and Gal 2. While similar people are involved in both visits there are differences in the role of Paul, the motivation for the visit and the nature of the meeting.⁵⁰⁹ In Gal 2.1–10, Paul has a central role (Gal 2.2, 7, 9), goes up to Jerusalem in response to a revelation (Gal 2.2) and the meeting takes place in private (Gal 2.2), while in Acts 15, Peter,

⁵⁰⁴ Jeremias, ‘Sabbathjahr,’ 102

⁵⁰⁵ Barrett, *Acts*, 1:560.

⁵⁰⁶ Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, London: SCM, 1956, 93.

⁵⁰⁷ Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, London: SCM, 1979, 111–12.

⁵⁰⁸ Haenchen, *Acts*, 377–78.

⁵⁰⁹ Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Dallas: Word, 1990, lxxvii–lxxviii.

Barnabas and James also have key roles (Acts 15.2, 7, 13), Paul is one of a group sent to Jerusalem (Acts 15.2) and the meeting seems to be more public (Acts 15.4–5, 12). In addition, if the Acts 15 did correlate to the Gal 2 visit, why does Paul not mention the result of the council meeting in the letter ‘which decision would have served as the *coup de grace* to the conflict at Galatia’?⁵¹⁰

- **Acts 11 is the same as the Galatians 2 visit.** Marshall argues that because the issue of Gentile converts and circumcision was a difficult one, there is ‘nothing improbable in the fact that a difficult subject had to be discussed more than once before agreement was finally reached’⁵¹¹ and therefore that Gal 2 can relate to Acts 11 with Acts 15 being a further discussion of the topic. Paul does not mention the collection directly in Gal 2, but Hemer points out that this could be due to the different ‘purposes and perspectives of the two writers’.⁵¹² Marshall and Witherington further argue that Gal 2.10 could easily refer to the fact that Paul was already in the process of helping the poor and wished to continue.⁵¹³

The number of famines under Claudius and the specific needs in Jerusalem suggest the likelihood of more than one visit with aid. The Acts 15 visit, while it has superficial similarities to the Gal 2 visit, has a number of differences. Therefore the third option while holding problems, for example, why the account in Acts 11 makes no reference to the meeting and discussion about the circumcision of Gentile converts, does seem most likely. By Acts 11.27, Paul has already been teaching in Antioch for ‘an entire year’ (11.26), even before the arrival of the prophets. We then need to allow time for the collection to take place and for the journey to Jerusalem. Paul could thus legitimately talk about his concern that he ‘had not run in vain’ (Gal 2.2). Paul’s comment in Gal 2.10 about remembering the poor could easily refer to what he was currently doing as well as his further desire to do so, and Marshall’s point about difficult subjects being repeatedly discussed seems sensible. Luke would not necessarily have catalogued each time it was discussed, nor every part of each meeting or journey that Paul made. Hemer’s work on possible dates for the crucifixion, Paul’s conversion and the Gal 2 visit to Jerusalem shows that equating Acts 11 with Gal 2 is possible if the visit is made around 46–47 CE,⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁰ Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxxix.

⁵¹¹ Marshall, *Acts*, 205.

⁵¹² Hemer, *Book*, 248.

⁵¹³ Marshall, *Acts*, 205; Witherington, *Acts*, 275.

⁵¹⁴ Hemer, *Book*, 264.

which would then fit with Paul and Barnabas arriving in the midst of the famine in Jerusalem.

Whichever of the three main options one goes for, Luke has still chosen to write the story where the Christians in Antioch respond to the need presented by Agabus and send a collection to the brothers in Judaea. Therefore, whether or not it is historically accurate, Luke still wants his readers to learn from the narrative. However, we would argue that Luke is not simply amalgamating sources to produce a particular impression, or to make a particular point, but rather reporting a situation which is historically plausible and thus the story is not only also an example in history, but also an example that Luke thinks is important to record.

3.3.1.3. Acts 12.25

The conclusion of the 11.27–30 account in 12.25 also raises textual problems. These centre on the preposition with Jerusalem, which is one of εἰς, ἀπο or ἐξ. The most difficult reading, and also the strongest by nature of its difficulty, which is supported by ‘the earliest and best witnesses’⁵¹⁵ is εἰς.⁵¹⁶ According to 11.27–30, Barnabas and Saul are already in Jerusalem and therefore it does not make sense for them to return there and by 13.2 Barnabas and Saul are back in Antioch ready to be sent out again. Additionally, Witherington points out that returning to Jerusalem, bringing with them John Mark, does not make sense either, as 12.12 places John Mark’s home in Jerusalem.⁵¹⁷ Various solutions have been suggested: Pervo emends the text to ‘to Antioch from Jerusalem’;⁵¹⁸ Haenchen and Johnson keep εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ, but attach it to the participial phrase as its object,⁵¹⁹ i.e. ‘when they had fulfilled their relief mission in Jerusalem.’⁵²⁰ This latter solution fits the flow of the narrative, otherwise Barnabas and Saul twice journey to Jerusalem without Luke noting their returns and 12.25 fits a return journey to Antioch better than another journey to Jerusalem. It also makes sense of the addition of John Mark to their group in 12.25. This interpretation has Luke placing Paul and Barnabas in Jerusalem during the persecution,⁵²¹ adding to the sense of solidarity expressed by the sending of the gift.

⁵¹⁵ Metzger, *Commentary*, 351.

⁵¹⁶ Supported by Ⲙ, B, Ⲳ.

⁵¹⁷ Witherington, *Acts*, 374. After all 12.12 places John Mark’s home in Jerusalem.

⁵¹⁸ Pervo, *Acts*, 316.

⁵¹⁹ Johnson, *Acts*, 216.

⁵²⁰ Haenchen, *Acts*, 381.

⁵²¹ Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, 337.

3.3.2. *The Example of the Collection for Judaea*

In 11.27-30 and 12.25 we are presented with the example of believers in Antioch responding to predicted need, each according to their means. The response is both corporate and individual: each of them, according to what they have, contributes and yet they decide. They send the collection via Barnabas and Saul, the two people who the preceding verses of the chapter tell us have been teaching the believers for an entire year (11.26). It thus appears that the sending of the collection was considered an important task (for Barnabas and Saul would not be able to continue their teaching while they travelled) and one which was given to those the Antioch church could trust. The relief fund is sent to the elders, which suggests a handing over of it for them to distribute.⁵²²

The account in Acts shows a sharing of possessions based on the need that is highlighted in Agabus' prophecy. It is a sharing of possessions that comes out of existing relationships and in a context where the church in Antioch has already received from the church in Judaea / Jerusalem and so there is an element of reciprocity in the relationship, even if it is not like for like: the church in Antioch has received the gospel from some who were scattered from Jerusalem following the persecution and believers in Judaea now receive from the church in Antioch. In addition some of the believers in Antioch originated from the church in Jerusalem and would probably still have family and friends living there.

It is a sharing of possessions that seems to cross the Jew / Gentile boundaries and shows continuity with the birthplace of the new movement and demonstrates 'the unity of Gentile and Jewish Messianists'.⁵²³ For, as we saw in 11.19-20, Luke makes a distinction between the proclaiming of the Lord Jesus in Antioch, and other places where 'they spoke to no one except Jews' (11.19). Thus, there is within the text innovation in terms of those to whom the word is proclaimed and we would expect the church in Antioch to include those who came from Jewish backgrounds and those who came from Gentile backgrounds. The believers who result from this innovation show their relationship with the 'mother' church by this collection for the need that exists or at least is known to be about to exist. While Acts shows the diversity of the church in Jerusalem with its account in chapter 6 of the need of the Hellenistic widows, there is not the same distinction or contrast

⁵²² Norman E. Thomas, 'The Church at Antioch: Crossing Racial, Cultural, and Class Barriers Acts 11.19-30; 13.1-3.,' in Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, eds, *Mission in Acts Ancient Narrative in Contemporary Context*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004, 144-56, citing 151.

⁵²³ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts*, New York: Crossroad, 1997, 116.

with that mention to indicate that the Jerusalem Hellenists⁵²⁴ were not Hellenistic Jews and we may assume that the majority of the church in Jerusalem came from a Jewish background.

This sharing between Jewish and Gentile believers is not limited to possessions. The effect of the placement of 12.25 is to locate Saul and Barnabas in Jerusalem during at least some of the persecution that is reported in chapter 12, even if, in reality, chapters 11 and 12 are concurrent and it hard to tell how much of the time they are in Jerusalem or Judaea. While Barnabas and Saul both come from Jewish background, they are representatives of the more mixed Jewish–Gentile church in Antioch and thus this church shares ‘not only in the material want of the Jerusalem congregation, but also in its danger’.⁵²⁵

It is interesting that the believers in Antioch are called *μαθητῶν* in verse 29, when they decide to send relief to the *ἀδελφοῖς* in Judaea. This suggests the sharing of possessions in this way was part of learning to follow / being discipled to Jesus, which would fit with the words of Jesus which are quoted by Paul in 20.35, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’⁵²⁶ The use of *ἀδελφοῖς* also points to the relationship between the Antiochene and Judean believers.

It is a sharing of possessions that acknowledges the ‘not yet’ nature of both the world and the Christian community. First, it is a response to a need brought about by a famine, showing the continued existence of need within the world. Secondly, it is a very carefully sent gift, which minimises the risk of misappropriation. In Acts 11.30 the gift is sent from the Antiochenes by the hands of those who have positions of responsibility within their community, Barnabas and Saul, and to those who have positions of responsibility with the community of the brothers living in Judaea, the elders. Entrusting the gift to the leaders in Jerusalem may reduce the chances of Barnabas and Saul being seen as patrons and the possibility of them undermining the existing structure of the community. As Calvin writes about these verses he

⁵²⁴ As we noted earlier Luke uses *Ἑλληνιστής* in a variety of ways. BDAG notes that in general *Ἑλληνιστής* refers to ‘a Greek-speaking Israelite in contrast to one speaking a Semitic language’ (319). Therefore in Acts 6.1 we would expect the Hellenists to be Jews, as Luke gives no indication otherwise and given that the context of the early church is the Pentecost festival.

⁵²⁵ Haenchen, *Acts*, 376.

⁵²⁶ Bruce argues that given that the first book Luke wrote is about what Jesus began to do, Acts is what he ‘continued to do after his ascension’ (Bruce, *Acts*, 21). If this is the case and connecting it with Acts 20.35 and Tannehill’s argument of the way that in Acts stories are used to demonstrate the teaching from Luke, we might build an argument that in this pericopae *οἱ πιστεύσας ἐπέστρεψεν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον* (11.21) are continuing the work of Jesus as they follow and learn as disciples, by contributing to the collection.

concludes that they ‘teach us we must not only be sincere and trustworthy but also wise and orderly in our choice and in all the administration.’⁵²⁷

3.3.3. *Responses to Famine and Food Shortage in the Graeco-Roman World*

Having considered the example of the collection for Judaea in Acts 11, we now consider contemporaneous responses to famine and food shortage and how these compare with the example in Acts 11.

Food crises were an ongoing issue and Garnsey reports that Samians and Athenians debated grain supply each year.⁵²⁸ Thus strategies were developed both in Rome, but also in other cities to respond to times of need. Food supply in Rome was particularly important politically. For example Dionysius of Halicarnassus writes about Spurius Maelius who in the context of famine in Rome (c. 438–435 BCE) ‘conceived it to be the best time for aiming at tyranny and turned to currying favour with the multitude’ (*Ant. rom.* 12.1.1; also Livy 4.13). He used money from his own funds to distribute corn ‘among the citizens, measuring out a peck for two denarii instead of for twelve denarii, and upon all those whom he perceived to be utterly helpless and unable to defray the cost of even their daily subsistence bestowing it without payment’ (*Ant. rom.* 12.1.2–3). Tacitus points to the way that Claudius was ‘surrounded by a wildly clamorous mob’ (*Ann.* 12.43) during a period of corn shortage and it is not surprising that Suetonius relates that Claudius ‘resorted to every possible means to bring grain to Rome, even in the winter season’ (*Clau.* 18.2). Suetonius notes that he did this by underwriting losses from storms and offering privileges to those who built merchant ships (*Clau.* 18.2–19). Tacitus reports that Tiberius made a maximum price for grain by ‘compensating merchants at the rate of 2 sesterces per modius’ (*Ann.* 2.87).

Outside Rome, Garnsey notes that ‘there was little regulation of the food supply by local governments’ and that ‘it was left very much to members of the elite acting in a private capacity to protect ordinary citizens against a breakdown of the food supply system.’⁵²⁹ However he argues that this provision ‘was so regular as to be an institutionalised feature of society’⁵³⁰ where members of the elite, on their own or with others took on the role of responsibility for grain supply.⁵³¹ This mix of private and public fits with Hands’ assessment that city states were mainly

⁵²⁷ Calvin, *Acts*, 197.

⁵²⁸ Garnsey, *Famine*, 16.

⁵²⁹ Garnsey, *Famine*, 43.

⁵³⁰ Garnsey, *Famine*, 15.

⁵³¹ Garnsey, *Famine*, 15.

financed on a ‘voluntary’ basis where important individuals were expected to give for buying corn, or for rebuilding and might expect some form of reward,⁵³² for example being given titles in response for subsidising the market.⁵³³ Hands also notes that when food prices went up, it could become more difficult to find someone to take on the responsibility of subsidising the market and ‘a single individual, or group of individuals acting together, might agree to hold several offices in the same year, or to hold the same annual office consecutively year after year.’⁵³⁴ For example, in Oenoanda, an inscription notes that the town clerk took on the responsibility of the corn dole again and in a particularly difficult time ἐπιδεδωκότα δὲ καὶ ἀργυρικὴ(ν) διάδοσιν καθ’ ἕκαστον τῶν πολειτῶν ἀνὰ δηνάρια δέκα (he also gave a distribution in money to each of the citizens – ten denarii).⁵³⁵ The same inscription reports his concern for honour.⁵³⁶ Winter notes that under this practice of appointing a benefactor as *curator annonae*, the person would then enable the sale of grain below the going rate.⁵³⁷ While one incentive for such a role was that honour could be gained, it was also ‘in the interests of the rich in a city to assist not merely from love of honour, but out of self-interest, knowing the alternative would be rioting and plundering of their goods and stores.’⁵³⁸

A similar pattern of rich patron or benefactor is seen in Josephus’ account of the visit of Helena to Jerusalem. It does not appear that she came in response to the famine. Josephus reports that γίνεται δὲ αὐτῆς ἡ ἄφιξις πάννυ συμφέρουσα τοῖς Ἱεροσολυμίταις (Her arrival was very advantageous for the people of Jerusalem)(*Ant.* 20.51) as she then used the money she was carrying to send her attendant to buy grain from Egypt and figs from Cyprus, which she distributed to those in need. When her son Izates learnt of the famine, he then sent πολλὰ χρήματα τοῖς πρώτοις τῶν Ἱεροσολυμιτῶν (a great sum of money to [the] leaders of the Jerusalemites)(*Ant.* 20.53), which may be in order to place them in a position

⁵³² A. R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1968, 42–43.

⁵³³ Hands, *Charities*, 53.

⁵³⁴ Hands, *Charities*, 54.

⁵³⁵ *IGRP* III 493.

⁵³⁶ In his documents section, Hands catalogues a number of other inscriptions that record situations where benefactors are appointed with a range of dates, for example: 2 (330–325 BCE), 7 (c. 150 BCE), 9 (c. 100 BCE) (Hands, *Charities*).

⁵³⁷ Winter, ‘Acts,’ 72–74.

⁵³⁸ Winter, ‘Acts,’ 74.

of being able to do what was seen as their duty and provide for the needs of the city in return for honour.

The example in the surrounding culture in times of food shortage was therefore for rich individuals or groups of richer people to contribute to a fund to subsidise the price of grain, or to distribute money. Such subsidies could be rewarded with honour, including titles and citations on inscriptions.

When we compare the example of the Antiochene church with the evidence we have of how Graeco-Roman society generally responded to food shortages, we find not only a major difference, but also a potential similarity. If the Antiochene church had lifted its pattern from the surrounding world, we would expect the richer members of the community to contribute to a fund, or, if they were rich enough, to do it by themselves. However Winter notes, in the example of Acts 11 ‘[t]he role of benefactor was assigned not only to the Christian of substance but to all members of the community who could work.’⁵³⁹ It is not clear how Winter concludes that it is only those Christians who work who contribute as the text actually says τῶν δὲ μαθητῶν καθὼς εὐπορεῖτό τις ὥρισαν ἕκαστος αὐτῶν εἰς διακονίαν πέμψαι, which seems to have a greater sense of ‘*according to his* (financial) *ability*’⁵⁴⁰ rather than ‘according to whether they have a job’, although the two may in many cases be related. However, the first allows for a wider contribution of all according to what they have, irrespective of whether they have a job. Thus in Acts 11, there is an expectation of a much wider contribution, as opposed to a contribution from a limited number of richer people. While it is not clear whether there were richer people among the Antiochene believers, we can expect some social differentiation and it is still the case that Acts 11 presents a wider ownership of contributions than the Graeco-Roman examples.

There is also a difference in relationships. In the Graeco-Roman examples, the giving seems to be based more on wealth and position in society. In contrast, the Antiochene example is based in more direct and personal relationships between the two communities. The example of Helena and Izates may have characteristics of both, for while they do not seem to have a direct and personal relationship with the people to whom they give, they may be in part motivated by their relationship to the Jewish community in Jerusalem through conversion as well as by their positions in society.

⁵³⁹ Winter, ‘Acts,’ 75–76.

⁵⁴⁰ BDAG, 410.

When we consider Izates' actions in sending the money to the prominent citizens of Jerusalem, we find a similarity to the action of the church in Antioch, which sends money to the elders. This is not necessarily a conclusive parallel, as it is a singular example, because much of the evidence about benefactors has the person or people taking on the role in their existing sphere of influence, rather than sending it to another location. It is however interesting that for Izates, a convert to Judaism, the obvious people to send his gift to were the prominent people in Jerusalem, rather than his mother, whom Josephus has not recorded as having left Jerusalem, and who had been responsible for the initial distribution.

3.3.4. Conclusion

In Acts 11.27–30 and 12.25, Luke presents an example of the sharing of possessions which is based on and confirms committed relationships. It is from believers to other believers, but beyond that is between two groups of believers who have existing relationships: the gospel is first proclaimed in Antioch by those who have fled from Jerusalem, Barnabas is sent from Jerusalem to Antioch and later the prophets come down from Jerusalem to Antioch (11.19, 20, 22, 27). It is an example where individuals contribute according to their ability, but it is also an example which shows corporate responsibility for the sharing. For each of them contribute and they decide together to contribute. The example is presented as something that is key to being disciples of Jesus. It is an example that evidences practical and careful stewardship. The gift is sent carefully with those who are seen as responsible, to those who are seen as responsible. It is a sharing of possessions in response to need. The response to a perceived need in a time of famine is also distinctive when compared with the way that Graeco-Roman society usually responded in that the Antiochene church spread the responsibility amongst all its members according to their ability, rather than restricting the giving to a few richer members, and based the giving in their relationship rather than in their riches or position in society. The response has a similarity to the giving of Izates who sends money to the prominent people in Jerusalem.

4. First Corinthians 11 – Sharing Food

4.1. Introduction

So far this thesis has considered instances where sharing is mainly financial: the common purse in John; the selling of property and houses to provide for those in need in Acts; and the collection in Antioch to send to the believers in Judaea. However in the first two of these examples, food is also shared. The gospels recount many stories of Jesus and his followers sharing food (Matt. 14.13–21; 15.29–39; Mark 2.13–17; Luke 10.38–42, 24.30–32; John 13.1–5, 21.7–14). In Acts 2.46 the believers eat together,⁵⁴¹ while in Acts 6 the choosing of the Seven arises out of disagreements in the daily distribution of food, which we argued included eating together.⁵⁴² While 1 Cor 11 does not include financial sharing, it is an example where sharing food appears to have led to problems, and where Paul writes to the Corinthians to address some of the issues they are facing. While Paul's criticism suggests a lack of sharing, his catechesis to the Corinthians indicates that he wanted them to be sharing food with one another and this is why we are examining 11.17–34⁵⁴³ as part of this thesis looking at sharing possessions.

This chapter considers what is happening in the church in Corinth and what Paul thinks should be happening in the church in Corinth. It examines the ways in which the practice, and Paul's instructions, look similar to and different from the practice in the surrounding culture.

In order to explore what may be happening, we start by a general overview of the different situations and forms that shared meals could take in the Graeco-Roman context and some of the elements that are similar across the situations. Having highlighted the common aspects of meal sharing, we also look at the patronage system that was widespread in the Graeco-Roman era and specifically ways in which this might interact with meal sharing.

We then consider the background of Corinth and of the Corinthian correspondence, before examining the text of 11.17–34 in detail, and other relevant passages, to assess what may be going on in Corinth, or at least what Paul thinks may be going on in Corinth, from the reports he has heard. We examine Paul's response to the situation he perceives: his criticism, catechesis and solution. As well

⁵⁴¹ See §3.2.1.1.

⁵⁴² See §3.2.1.4.

⁵⁴³ Biblical references in this chapter will be to 1 Corinthians unless otherwise stated.

as the primary evidence considered in the background to meals and patronage, we will look in greater depth at the evidence of the meals of the society of Diana and Antinous at Lanuvium (136 CE), and the Iobacchoi (dated 164/165 CE, though providing evidence of formation in the early second century), which both give detailed instructions about groups eating together. The Iobacchoi provide evidence from Athens and the Society of Diana and Antinous from Rome. Both cities had influenced Corinth society. While they are later than 1 Corinthians, there is evidence of other societies dining together in the first century BCE (*IG V,1 209*)⁵⁴⁴ and in the first century CE (*IG X, 2.1 259*).⁵⁴⁵ These earlier inscriptions provide evidence that such societies existed, but they provide less evidence about the detail of the arrangements. Therefore informed by the evidence of earlier groups meeting, we will use the more detailed evidence from the Society of Diana and Antinous and the Iobacchoi in conjunction with the more general evidence of meal sharing for comparison with the pattern of sharing food that Paul is advocating in Corinth.

4.2. Graeco-Roman Background

First we consider the different situations and forms that shared meals could take in the Graeco-Roman context, the common aspects of meal sharing and the ways that patronage might interact with meal sharing. This will help us understand what may be taking place in Corinth and the ways in which Paul's instructions look similar to and different from the practice in the surrounding culture.

4.2.1. Meals in the Graeco-Roman World

In his comprehensive *religionsgeschichtliche* study of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians, Klauck provides comparisons between the Lord's Supper and various Jewish and Graeco-Roman meals⁵⁴⁶ and concludes that while there exist parallels, 'keiner aber ist mit dem Herrenmahl völlig dekkungsgleich'.⁵⁴⁷ Klauck's study aims to understand the multilayered influences on the Lord's Supper⁵⁴⁸ by the time of 1 Corinthians; however our aim in this chapter is to consider what happened at the church in Corinth, what the pattern of meals in the surrounding Corinthian culture

⁵⁴⁴ <http://philipharland.com/Greco-roman-associations/?p=2545> accessed 16/09/2014.

⁵⁴⁵ <http://philipharland.com/Greco-roman-associations/?p=2388> accessed 16/09/2014.

⁵⁴⁶ H. J. Klauck, *Herrenmahl und hellenistischer Kult : eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum ersten Korintherbrief*, Münster: Aschendorff, 1982, 365-8.

⁵⁴⁷ Klauck, *Herrenmahl*, 368.

⁵⁴⁸ Klauck, *Herrenmahl*, 370.

may have been, what Paul is advocating in 1 Corinthians and how the three relate. We turn therefore to consider the background of Graeco-Roman meals in Corinth, so that we can then identify similarities and differences when we look at 1 Corinthians. Smith points out that when people met for a purpose, be it religious or social, in the Graeco-Roman world, they would have a meal.⁵⁴⁹ While there were differences between the meals in specific situations, 'the evidence suggests that meals took similar forms and shared similar meaning and interpretations across a broad range of the ancient world.'⁵⁵⁰

4.2.1.1. *Different Meal Contexts*

There were various groups which frequently had meals together. There were clubs, which included Greek clubs, Roman *collegia* and voluntary associations (VA);⁵⁵¹ philosophical groups; and mystery cults. Within Roman cities only three types of *collegia* were allowed: professional *collegia* for a recognised trade, religious *collegia* (to worship a foreign god, which could be a front for an unrecognised trade) and burial *collegia* which catered for burial for the poor.⁵⁵² Professional *collegia* would have a patron deity and thus worship would still be involved. Christians and Jews were often seen as clubs / VAs.

Meals took place in different contexts including funeral / memorial meals, sacrificial meals and public meals. Funerary meals took place on the day of the funeral or at the end of a period of mourning (Homer, *Od.* 3.309-311).⁵⁵³ Memorial meals took place on the anniversary of the deceased's birthday (Diogenes Laertius, *LEP* 10.18) and allowed for continued fellowship with the dead.⁵⁵⁴ In some cases they presumed that the dead could enjoy the pleasures of living.⁵⁵⁵ While the Lord's Supper looked back to Jesus' death, it was not yearly and remembered his death rather than taking place on his birthday.

Sacrificial meals included an animal being killed and often its entrails being inspected.⁵⁵⁶ The participants would then usually eat the animal. If there was no

⁵⁴⁹ Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003, 2.

⁵⁵⁰ Smith, *Symposium*, 2.

⁵⁵¹ For further details about VAs see §6.7.3.

⁵⁵² John Stambaugh and David Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians*, London: SPCK, 1986, 125.

⁵⁵³ Smith, *Symposium*, 42.

⁵⁵⁴ Lanu Jamir, 'Exclusion and Judgment in Fellowship Meals,' PhD thesis, Middlesex University, 2012, 62.

⁵⁵⁵ Smith, *Symposium*, 41-42.

⁵⁵⁶ John Stambaugh, 'The Functions of Roman Temples,' *ANRW* 2.16.1, Berlin/New York: deGruyter, 1978, 554-608, citing 577.

accompanying meal, it was usual to specify that they were θυσίαι ἄδαιτοί (meal-less sacrifices).⁵⁵⁷ The gods could be ‘thought to be present as guest or host in the meals held in their honour.’⁵⁵⁸ Such meals could take place at a temple. In Acrocorinth there is evidence of up to 40 dining rooms at the temple.⁵⁵⁹ Stambaugh notes that the Senate met at temples ‘so that the gods could be consulted through augury’.⁵⁶⁰ However Klauck points out there is no evidence of a sacrifice taking place within the Lord’s Supper.⁵⁶¹

Meals could also be very public occasions, for example the public banquets⁵⁶² which could be bestowed by emperors or governors.

4.2.1.2. *Jewish Meals*

As we have already seen there were also Jewish meals of various kinds, from the yearly Passover celebrations, to the meals of the Essenes, and meals at Qumran.⁵⁶³ There were also Pharisaic meals and meals of the *haverim* where purity laws were very important.⁵⁶⁴ The story of *Joseph and Aseneth* is sometimes used for comparison to the Lord’s Supper. Both meals involved ‘the blessing of bread and partaking of bread and wine as a sacred meal’.⁵⁶⁵ *Joseph and Aseneth* refers to the bread and cup: ‘And may she drink the cup of thy blessing’ (8.11), however the bread and cup are also referred to in conjunction with oil ‘the blessed unction of incorruption’ (8.5). While there are some similarities, these are merely in the eating of bread and drinking of wine, which are not unusual for a meal, and there are differences, both in the presence of oil and the setting of the account. In addition, it does not seem likely that those at Corinth would have known this story.

There is some evidence for the presence of Jewish Christians in the Corinthian church. However there is little evidence of Essene / Pharasaic meals in Asia Minor and the Lord’s Supper is celebrated more often than Passover. It

⁵⁵⁷ Smith, *Symposium*, 69.

⁵⁵⁸ Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 63.

⁵⁵⁹ Panayotis Coutsoumpos, *Paul and the Lord's Supper. A Socio-Historical Investigation*, New York: Peter Lang, 2005, 21.

⁵⁶⁰ Stambaugh, ‘Function,’ 580.

⁵⁶¹ Klauck, *Herrenmahl*, 366.

⁵⁶² R. I. Pervo, ‘PANTA KOINA: The Feeding Stories in the Light of Economic Data and Social Practice,’ in L. Bormann, K. Del Tredici and A. Standhartinger, eds, *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi*, Leiden: Brill, 1994, 164–94, citing 184.

⁵⁶³ See §2.2.2.1.2.

⁵⁶⁴ Smith, *Symposium*, 151–152.

⁵⁶⁵ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 28.

therefore seems unlikely that regular Jewish meals are the most appropriate place to look for influence and comparison from the immediate Corinthian context.

4.2.1.3. *Meals: Form and Structure*

While meals could take place in a number of contexts: homes, temples, *scola* of associations/*collegia* and for a variety of occasions, there are aspects which may be seen across many of the meals. We now turn to look at the form or structure of these meals. In some instances the evidence comes from accounts or rules for special clubs, in other instances, the descriptions are from literary stories.⁵⁶⁶

By the time of 1 Corinthians the Greek δειπνον and the Roman *cena* had moved from being main meals at lunchtime to being evening meals. In a Greek δειπνον, 36 or more people could be accommodated,⁵⁶⁷ while a Roman dining room could only hold multiples of three,⁵⁶⁸ which would normally be 6, 9 or 12 people dining together.⁵⁶⁹ While Greek meals generally only included men, Roman meals included men and women.⁵⁷⁰

A larger group of guests in a Roman villa-style house would be split between rooms, with the more important guests on the couches in the *triclinium* and others accommodated in the *atrium*, standing or on chairs. ‘This arrangement immediately divided those who attended into first- and second-class members. Not only was it more prestigious to have a place in the dining room, but it was a lot more comfortable.’⁵⁷¹

For some meals the host provided the food: for *eranos* meals, those attending contributed in some way rather like a ‘potluck’ meal.⁵⁷² This could involve people

⁵⁶⁶ While Meggitt helpfully highlights the elite nature of most literary sources (Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998, 12-13; Justin J. Meggitt, ‘Sources: Use, Abuse, Neglect. The Importance of Ancient Popular Culture,’ in Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, eds, *Christianity at Corinth. The Quest for the Pauline Church*, London: Westminster John Knox, 2004, 241-54, citing 242-43), Longenecker provides evidence that the Corinthian church was more socially varied than Meggitt allows for (Longenecker, *Remembering*, 226-48) and argues that ‘Meggitt’s own advocacy of binary dichotomization is in full accord with the rhetorical construction of the elite’ (Longenecker, *Remembering*, 42).

⁵⁶⁷ Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 18.

⁵⁶⁸ Smith, *Symposium*, 26.

⁵⁶⁹ Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 18.

⁵⁷⁰ John d’Arms, ‘The Roman *Convivium* and the Idea of Equality,’ in Oswyn Murray, ed. *Symptica. A Symposium on the Symposium*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1990, 308-19, citing 312.

⁵⁷¹ Nathan D. Mitchell, ‘The Amen Corner: Paul’s Eucharistic Theology,’ *Worship* 83 (2009) 250-62, citing 258.

⁵⁷² Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 13, 15.

bringing their own food.⁵⁷³ Plutarch (*Quaest. conv.* 646C) refers to bringing food in baskets and Homer to individual portions (*Od.* 1.226-7). There were also occasions where money was brought as a contribution.⁵⁷⁴ However there was also criticism of individual portions (*Od.* 1.226-7) and Xenophon recounts Socrates giving orders for sharing (*Mem.* 3.14.1).

Coutsoumpos notes that Roman meals traditionally had three parts: the *gustatio* or *promulsis* where the appetite was whetted with *mulsum*, the *ferucla* or courses where the main dishes were eaten⁵⁷⁵ and the *mensae secundae* where nuts, fruit and cake were served with the *convivium*, drinking party, which normally involved entertainment.⁵⁷⁶ There was a similar split in the Greek tradition where the drinking happened after the main eating of the δεῖπνον in the συμπόσιον. Smith notes that by Roman times, a Greek δεῖπνον also included appetizers.⁵⁷⁷

Usually as guests arrived water would be brought for them to wash before eating (*Od.* 7.170-179) and through the meal they would be served by slaves.⁵⁷⁸ Plutarch notes the importance of dedicating dishes (*Quaest. conv.* 7.4.703), although it not clear whether Plutarch is talking about the dedication of the pot or what it contains. As the meal moved into the *convivium* or συμπόσιον stage, the transition would be marked by libations (*Od.* 3.330-347, 7.135-140, 7.162-167; Plato *Symp.* 176A), which would involve ‘a chant to the god’ even when the meal was ‘a symposium of a secular nature’.⁵⁷⁹ This second stage of the meal could also include newly arrived guests (Plato *Symp.* 175 C-D).⁵⁸⁰

In some smaller cult meals there could be a range of people involved where ‘the individuals contributed according to their abilities: the wealthier members made dedications and undertook necessary reconstruction’ while ‘the poorer members contributed the minimum fees to the group’s treasury, and performed such duties as they could’.⁵⁸¹ However this did not necessarily mean that each had an equal standing at a meal, as we will see later when we examine the Society of

⁵⁷³ Peter Lampe, ‘The Eucharistic Dinner Party: Exegesis of a Cultural Context (1 Cor. 11:17-34),’ *Affirmation* 4 (1991) 1-16, citing 4.

⁵⁷⁴ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 46. Also possibly seen in Martial *Ep.* 60.

⁵⁷⁵ Bach points out that main courses usually involved the staple (*sitos*), accompaniment (*opson*) and drink (*poton*). Alice Bach and Jennifer Glancy, ‘The Morning after in Corinth: Bread and Butter Notes, Part 1,’ *Biblical Interpretation* 11 (2003) 449-467, citing 452-453.

⁵⁷⁶ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 45. Smith, *Symposium*, 27.

⁵⁷⁷ Smith, *Symposium*, 27.

⁵⁷⁸ Smith, *Symposium*, 28.

⁵⁷⁹ Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 90.

⁵⁸⁰ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 47. Smith, *Symposium*, 31.

⁵⁸¹ Stambaugh, ‘Function,’ 599.

Diana and Antinous. Indeed in many instances meals ‘were used to create and maintain social divisions in status.’⁵⁸²

There is some discussion about the extent to which meals were religious or secular in nature. For example, Coutsoumpos argues that even in temple settings not all meals at temple were sacramental,⁵⁸³ and Smith notes meals could take place in temples for they could be meals on social or familial occasions like marriage and birthdays.⁵⁸⁴ However, earlier, Smith himself argues that meals ‘have an integrative function in ancient society in which they combine the sacred and the secular into one ritual event’.⁵⁸⁵ The distinction between sacred and social seems to be anachronistic.

As well as having religious elements, ‘Meals in Greco-Roman society were a central focus of social intercourse’.⁵⁸⁶ This can be seen in the evidence for meals in a variety of contexts from the ways that temples included dining rooms, to the invitations to dinners at temples and in homes, and the way that synagogues had meal facilities.⁵⁸⁷

4.2.1.4. *Status and Stratification at Meals*

Meals gave the opportunity for gaining or showing status⁵⁸⁸ due to the stratification that was obvious in many meals. Saturnalia was the one occasion where there was an opportunity for equality. At the feast of Saturnalia, the rich were meant to entertain the poor (Lucian *Sat.* 15) and people were to sit freely and be served the same food and drink (*Sat.* 17). However Lucian still indicates that some form of return should be made, whether garlands of flowers or grains or frankincense (*Sat.* 16). It was an occasion where ‘slaves were permitted to take the place of their

⁵⁸² Smith, *Symposium*, 68.

⁵⁸³ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 22. Coutsoumpos seems to have a relatively narrow definition of sacramental in this instance, using it to refer to meals where a sacrifice had taken place with a religious ceremony or which related to initiation and thus sees meals to celebrate coming of age as non-sacramental.

⁵⁸⁴ Smith, *Symposium*, 76. In contrast invitations to meals in honour of Lord Serapis indicate they could take place ‘in private homes as well as temples’ (Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 35).

⁵⁸⁵ Smith, *Symposium*, 6.

⁵⁸⁶ Alex T. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth. Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, 35.

⁵⁸⁷ Bradley B. Blue, ‘The House Church at Corinth and the Lord’s Supper: Famine, Food Supply, and the present distress,’ *CTR* 5 (1991) 221–239, citing 221–224. For the importance of meals to the Jewish communities see also Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 23–60.

⁵⁸⁸ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, 244.

master, including at the banquets⁵⁸⁹ and where the poor could be invited in and treated well.⁵⁹⁰

However Saturnalia was not the normal approach to how people from different backgrounds ate together. Those from different backgrounds would usually be given different places to sit and different food and drink.⁵⁹¹ Juvenal notes that when a supper invite is a repayment for a client they can expect the lowest place on the lowest couch (*Sat.* 5.12-18). Those of lower rank still would not recline but sit.⁵⁹² Invitations might also be rejected due to status concerns.⁵⁹³

Juvenal satirises the contrasts in the food for people of different rank served up at meals: the 'huge lobster' compared to the 'shrimp' (*Sat.* 5.80-85), 'fruits such as grew in the never-failing Autumn of the Phaeacians' compared to 'a rotten apple' (*Sat.* 5.150-155). Not only could the type and quality of the food vary but also the size of the portions.⁵⁹⁴

The etiquette of meals was one of Graeco-Roman writers' concerns and some advocated equality.⁵⁹⁵ Plutarch addresses the question of whether a host should assign his guests places or leave them to choose themselves. He gives the example of his brother Timon allowing free seating, but then when a late-arriving rich foreign guest comes, he refuses to enter as 'he saw no place left worthy of him' (*Quaest. Conv.* 8.615). Their father then argues against free seating, urging the need for organisation and for the honour due to each person to be observed (*Quaest. Conv.* 8.615-616B).

Pliny argues against the disparity in quality and quantity of food served at meals, asserting that he provides the same food for all at his dinners (*Ep.* 2.6). However, as Crossan and Reed point out, his solution is not that he raises the standard of the food he serves, but rather that all get served the more basic food.⁵⁹⁶ Plutarch argues that when everything is shared, meals are better for fellowship and that not sharing sows enmity (*Quaest. conv.* 643E). However he notes some of the challenges of this approach, for example, people grabbing from the shared dishes as

⁵⁸⁹ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 84.

⁵⁹⁰ Witherington, *Conflict*, 241-242.

⁵⁹¹ Stambaugh and Balch, *World*, 114.

⁵⁹² Smith, *Symposium*, 10-11.

⁵⁹³ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 70.

⁵⁹⁴ Smith, *Symposium*, 92. Martial indicates that sometimes the differentiation was masked (*Ep.* 4.85).

⁵⁹⁵ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 84.

⁵⁹⁶ John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul. How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom*, London: SPCK, 2005, 339.

quickly as possible, which causes conflict, providing an argument for equal portions. Plutarch notes that while this might be seen as destroying companionship, it is not the case if there is equality in the portions (*Quaest. conv.* 643E–644D), but that it causes issues where people have different food requirements (*Quaest. conv.* 643C).

However while there is evidence of equality at meals being a topic for discussion, it seems unlikely that meals generally involved free seating and equal food and portions. The arguments put forward by the writers suggest that equality of portions and free seating was something that was being tried out on occasion, rather than the norm. Plutarch's description of the variety of Timon's guests is also telling: they are varied because they include 'foreigners as well as citizens, friends as well as kinsmen, and, in a word, all sorts of people' (*Quaest. conv.* 615D). While this indicates some variety, there is no evidence that they represented a particularly wide range of social backgrounds in terms of wealth or influence. Blue argues that 'It was uncommon for different classes to eat together'.⁵⁹⁷

While equality was on the agenda for some, there is ample evidence of differentiation in meals. In *collegia*, there was different treatment for officers, even though *collegia* were likely to be more socially homogeneous than the Corinthian congregation.⁵⁹⁸ Plutarch, for all his arguments for equality, only goes so far: while he argues to leave portions of food from the dinner for the slaves that they may share with them, it is a sharing that involves them eating it afterwards rather than partaking in the meal at the same time (*Quaest. conv.* 703D–E).⁵⁹⁹ Smith argues that writers such as Martial and Pliny 'can be seen as reflecting aspects of common meal etiquette even as they argue against prevailing customs'.⁶⁰⁰ Pliny argues that there are dangers of equality (*Ep.* 9.5) and Lucian recounts Alcidas complaining about sitting rather than reclining (*Symp.* 13). Therefore, rather than encouraging equality, meals more often reinforced status and hierarchy, and in some cases created it.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁷ Blue, 'Church,' , 239.

⁵⁹⁸ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 88.

⁵⁹⁹ Pervo notes that in general both in terms of meals and charity, those who were poorer received less and that 'When the poor did receive anything like equality, it would be upon a religious occasion.' (Pervo, 'PANTA,' 186)

⁶⁰⁰ Smith, *Symposium*, 45. Martial *Ep.* 3.60.

⁶⁰¹ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 103, 73–75.

4.2.2. *Patronage*⁶⁰²

Another way that people from different backgrounds would meet together, and eat together, is through the patronage system, which Horsley argues is a likely background for some of the relational issues in Corinth.⁶⁰³ Patronage was one of the main organisation structures in the Graeco-Roman world. Indeed Crossan and Reed argue that patronage was the main ordering in the Roman world,⁶⁰⁴ and Braund that personal patronage was pervasive.⁶⁰⁵ Patronage involved hierarchy and a web of relationships where favours were exchanged between patrons and clients.⁶⁰⁶ Patronage relations were key for gaining resources and prestige, therefore having powerful patrons and bestowing benefaction were both seen as important.⁶⁰⁷ '[S]uch relations might also be one of the important channels through which scarce resources, such as powerful positions in the imperial government or local government were distributed.'⁶⁰⁸ Plunder and charity were often distributed according to wealth and position and therefore if you wanted access, you needed to be or to know someone with either wealth or position.⁶⁰⁹

These patronage relations also worked on a household level and Meeks points out that a household was not simply members with common kinship, but would include 'slaves, former slaves who were now clients, [and] hired labourers'⁶¹⁰ who

⁶⁰² For further details about patronage, see §5.7.4.

⁶⁰³ Richard A. Horsley ed. *Paul and Empire. Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, Harrisburg: Trinity International, 1997, 125.

⁶⁰⁴ Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 297; also Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'Patronage in Roman Society: from Republic to Empire,' in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, ed. *Patronage in Ancient Society*, London: Routledge, 1989, 63–87, citing 72.

⁶⁰⁵ David Braund, 'Function and Dysfunction: Personal Patronage in Roman Imperialism,' in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, ed. *Patronage in Ancient Society*, London: Routledge, 1989, 137–52, citing 137. There is some disagreement about the involvement of the very poor within patronage relationships. For example Cloud argues they were excluded because they had no vote (Duncan Cloud, 'The Client-Patron Relationship: Emblem and Reality in Juvenal's First Book,' in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, ed. *Patronage in Ancient Society*, London: Routledge, 1989, 205–18, citing 210), but this presumes that the vote was key and also does not acknowledge the patronage relationships seen in the hierarchy of Voluntary Associations (Rachel M. McRae, 'Eating with Honor: The Corinthian Lord's Supper in Light of Voluntary Association Meal Practices,' *JBL* 130 (2011) 165–81, citing 166, 171).

⁶⁰⁶ Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture*, London: Duckworth, 1987, 148.

⁶⁰⁷ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003, 5.

⁶⁰⁸ John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power. A Study of Social Networks in Corinth*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, 64.

⁶⁰⁹ David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996, 70.

⁶¹⁰ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 2nd edn, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, 30.

might well live clustered around the patron's house.⁶¹¹ The head of the household, the *paterfamilias* had a key position.⁶¹² Freedmen would still owe allegiance to their former owner and they would often take the owner's *praenomen* and *nomen* and could not harm their patron or bring a case against them.⁶¹³ A patron or head of a household could also have literary or philosophical clients as well as freedmen clients.⁶¹⁴

A household was in effect a small pyramid connected into a much bigger pyramid of patronage relationships where the emperor was the patron of the whole empire.⁶¹⁵ As Corinth was a Roman colony, the emperor would be seen as Corinth's patron and we can see this in the titles ascribed to the emperor in Corinth and the presence of imperial cult.⁶¹⁶ Chow also argues that because Corinth was a Roman colony and patronage was important in empire, we can expect to see its importance in Corinth.⁶¹⁷ Government officials operated as clients to the emperor and patrons to others.⁶¹⁸ They could bestow 'citizenship, offices and honours from Rome'.⁶¹⁹ In Corinth, we see a number of inscriptions (*Corinth* 8,3: 159-163) which honour Claudius Dinnipis for his patronage in his role as a *curator annonae*, a role which he undertook three times.⁶²⁰

While patron-client relationships were widespread, Saller points out that *cliens* is not necessarily used to refer to clients because it could be seen as being demeaning.⁶²¹ *Patronus* was more regularly used, although it was used more of 'the mediators who supported the careers of young senators and equestrians'.⁶²² The presence or absence of the word would not necessarily indicate the presence or absence of a patronage relationship.⁶²³

⁶¹¹ Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 309.

⁶¹² Horrell, *Ethos*, 68.

⁶¹³ Chow, *Patronage*, 70. Stambaugh and Balch, *World*, 115. Wallace-Hadrill points out that this was different from many patron-client relationships because the relationship had a position in law (Wallace-Hadrill, 'Patronage,' 76).

⁶¹⁴ Chow, *Patronage*, 72.

⁶¹⁵ Mitchell, 'Amen,' 252; Chow, *Patronage*, 41; Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 150. Suetonius provides evidence of emperors providing meals *Vesp.* 19 and *Dom.* 7.

⁶¹⁶ Chow, *Patronage*, 43-4.

⁶¹⁷ Chow, *Patronage*, 40.

⁶¹⁸ Chow, *Patronage*, 52-57; Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire*, Cambridge: CUP, 1982, 30-31.

⁶¹⁹ Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 151.

⁶²⁰ Horsley ed. *Paul*, 116.

⁶²¹ Saller, *Patronage*, 9; Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 153.

⁶²² Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 153. Garnsey and Saller argue that this form of patronage may be seen as an example of superior / inferior friendship. (Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 152).

⁶²³ Saller, *Patronage*, 11.

Amicitia could include ‘exchange relationships between men of equal, as well as unequal, social status’.⁶²⁴ Where their statuses were unequal, this was a patronage relationship, where their statuses were more equal, this might involve a relationship, where there was a responsibility to help the clients of the other⁶²⁵ who would then be obligated to the new patron as well, or be friends with friends of friends. For example, Cicero mentions a persistent invitation to dinner from the friend of a friend (*Fam.* 7.9.3).⁶²⁶ Saller notes that patronage language was used for a range of relationships and notes the overlap between *amicitia* and *clientela*.⁶²⁷ Patronage thus took place at different levels of society.⁶²⁸

Within a patronage relationship a client might gain food (*sportulae*),⁶²⁹ finance and opportunities, while the patron gained dignity, status and praise.⁶³⁰ Occasionally the client might be invited to dinner, although they would receive poorer food and there would be a hierarchy in the seating arrangements.⁶³¹ Clients would also be expected to visit their patron in the morning to perform the morning *salutatio*, one way to give honour. Depending on the status of the client or protégé they would have been received in different ways at the morning *salutatio*. Peers would have been received in private, lesser *amici* in the atrium in groups, and *clientes* en mass, in some cases outside.⁶³² Clients might also accompany a patron on his business or applaud him in court.⁶³³

4.3. Corinth and the Corinthian church

We have considered the wider meal practice and patronage background of the early church in Corinth and we now turn to look at the city itself and the evidence we

⁶²⁴ Saller, *Patronage*, 15.

⁶²⁵ Saller, *Patronage*, 25. Pliny *Ep.* 2.13.2.

⁶²⁶ Chow provides more information about the kinds of bonds in patronage relationships. (Chow, *Patronage*, 35–6)

⁶²⁷ Richard Saller, ‘Patronage and Friendship in Early Imperial Rome: Drawing the Distinction,’ in Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, ed. *Patronage in Ancient Society*, London: Routledge, 1989, 49–62, citing 57, 61.

⁶²⁸ Wallace-Hadrill, ‘Patronage,’ , 77.

⁶²⁹ Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 151.

⁶³⁰ Chow, *Patronage*, 73.

⁶³¹ Chow, *Patronage*, 74. For further details §4.2.1.4.

⁶³² Saller, *Patronage*, 11.

⁶³³ Garnsey and Saller, *Empire*, 151. Crossan and Reed argue that Paul’s refusal to accept support at Corinth is because of the level of patronage in Corinth and because Paul wished to avoid being seen either as patron or client to those within the congregation with the expectations that that would bring (Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 332–336) and the ways that it might limit ‘gospel ministry’ (Steve Walton, ‘Paul, Patronage and Pay: What Do We Know about the Apostle’s Financial Support?’, in Trevor J. Burke and Brian S. Rosner, eds, *Paul as Missionary. Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*, London: T & T Clark, 2011, 220–233, citing 232).

have for the situations and issues in the early church there. Examining the background and make up of the church in Corinth, together with the wider issues the church was facing will help us assess what may be happening when they meet together to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

In 146 BCE Corinth was levelled to the ground by Roman soldiers.⁶³⁴ It was refounded as a Roman colony in 44 BCE⁶³⁵ and in 27 BCE become the seat of the governor of Achaia, before becoming a senatorial province in 44 CE.⁶³⁶ The Roman colony was settled by a range of people, some former soldiers, some Greek, some Jewish and was 'Rome's most important colony in the East in this era.'⁶³⁷ It was also somewhere that freedman had more possibilities for advancement than elsewhere.⁶³⁸

The city was situated on an isthmus, in a key position for East-West and North-South trade.⁶³⁹ As an important centre for trade and with settlers from different backgrounds and places, Corinth included people from diverse social and religious backgrounds (Pausanias *Descr.* 2.6).⁶⁴⁰ There is evidence of Greek religions and philosophy, mystery cults, different shrines, as well as the Jewish presence we have already mentioned.⁶⁴¹ It seems likely that some of these shrines were established by non-citizen residents who wanted to create 'some sense of ethnic identity by establishing local cults of their native gods.'⁶⁴² There are more Latin than Greek inscriptions for this period⁶⁴³ and the coins are generally Latin as well.⁶⁴⁴ This evidence indicates that the city was thoroughly Roman. We see further evidence for this in the layout of dining rooms in temples and *triclinia* and *atria* in villas in Corinth.⁶⁴⁵

⁶³⁴ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1968; 1-2, Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians. A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006, 5.

⁶³⁵ Barrett, *First*, 2, Thiselton, *Shorter*, 5.

⁶³⁶ Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, 12.

⁶³⁷ Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul left Corinth*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, 21.

⁶³⁸ Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth. A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6*, Leiden: Brill, 1993, 21.

⁶³⁹ Barrett, *First*, 1.

⁶⁴⁰ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St Paul's Corinth Texts and Archaeology*, Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983, 23.

⁶⁴¹ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 111. Philo *Legat.* 281-82 (Murphy-O'Connor (1983), *Corinth*, 78).

⁶⁴² Meeks, *Christians*, 13.

⁶⁴³ Thiselton, *Shorter*, 19-20.

⁶⁴⁴ Winter, *Paul*, 11.

⁶⁴⁵ Winter, *Paul*, 8; Witherington, *Conflict*, 195.

Our knowledge of the Corinthian church comes mainly from the two extant letters to the Corinthian church and from the account in Acts 18.1–18⁶⁴⁶ and is therefore limited to Paul's side of the correspondence and relationship.⁶⁴⁷ The Delphi fragment indicates that Gallio was proconsul in either 50–51 CE or 51–52 CE.⁶⁴⁸ Therefore using Acts 18.12, it is likely that Paul was in Corinth 49–51 or 50–52 CE.⁶⁴⁹ First Corinthians is Paul's response to a letter from the Corinthian church (7.1), which Horrell suggests may have been brought by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (16.17)⁶⁵⁰ and the report from Chloe's people (1.11). Paul addresses issues that have been raised by the congregation and that have come to light from those who have journeyed to see him. These issues range from leadership and wisdom, to sexual immorality and gifts of the Spirit.

In Acts and 1 Corinthians we see evidence of a church where there are people from different backgrounds and walks of life. We find mention of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18.2), who were artisans, accommodated Paul, and hosted the congregation. They also had the means to travel.⁶⁵¹ Chloe's people may have been slaves or other members of her household (1.11) and Chow points out that Fortunatus and Achaicus' names may have a servile origin and may indicate that they were freedmen or dependants of Stephanus (16.17).⁶⁵² Erastus is mentioned in Romans 16.23 as οἰκονόμος, which Crossan and Reed note is 'a notch below the

⁶⁴⁶ There is significant discussion about the unity of each of the Corinthian letters and the relationship between Paul's visits and letters. Crossan and Reed construct a series of five letters (of which 1 Corinthians is one, 2 Corinthians is the amalgamation of two letters and there are two lost letters) and three visits (Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 332–333). Conzelmann addresses the question of whether 1 Corinthians is one letter and argues that while there are transitions of thought and different degrees of knowledge about circumstances that 'The existing breaks can be explained from the circumstances of its composition' (Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 3–4) and Thiselton notes that we have an early near complete Greek manuscript and that there is not agreement about where the letter would be partitioned (Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, 36–7). We will follow Conzelmann and Thiselton's position as we consider 1 Corinthians.

⁶⁴⁷ Chow, *Patronage*, 84.

⁶⁴⁸ C. K. Barrett ed. *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*, London: SPCK, 1956, 48–49.

⁶⁴⁹ Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 12. Horrell suggests that the visit is earlier and that the edict of Claudius expelling Jews from Rome is earlier with Acts 18 presenting a conflation of two visits (Horrell, *Ethos*, 73–4). However this would still place one of the visits during the time that Gallio was proconsul.

⁶⁵⁰ Horrell, *Ethos*, 91, also F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953, 14.

⁶⁵¹ Horrell, *Ethos*, 99. Crossan and Reed suggest that Priscilla and Aquila rent property as they move around (Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 329), although they could have a base in one place, which they owned, and rented in other places.

⁶⁵² Chow, *Patronage*, 90–91.

office of aedilis'.⁶⁵³ Gaius hosted Paul and the whole church (Rom 16.23, 1 Cor 1.14), Phoebe, διάκονος at Cenchreae was προστάτις of many (Rom 16.2). Phoebe also travels which again suggests riches.⁶⁵⁴ The litigation in 1 Corinthians 6 would also have required wealth.⁶⁵⁵ So we see evidence of some more affluent and influential people among the congregation. However we can also find evidence of less affluent members.

When Paul addresses the Corinthians he reminds them ὅτι οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί, οὐ πολλοὶ εὐγενεῖς (1.26). We find slaves (7.21), as well as those who are not slaves (7.22) addressed in 1 Cor 7. In 11.21 there are ὅς [μὲν] πεινᾷ. Thus while 'most of the people named by Paul probably belonged to the upper class',⁶⁵⁶ the church as a whole was made up of people from a range of social backgrounds.⁶⁵⁷

However Meggitt argues that most people in Corinth would have had 'brutal and frugal lives characterised by struggle and impoverishment'.⁶⁵⁸ He then argues that the references in 1.26 and 4.10 do not necessarily point to the presence of more affluent members of the church or to those from the ruling classes. In 4.10 Meggitt argues Paul 'is making reference to the Corinthians' sense of spiritual (rather than social) self-importance'.⁶⁵⁹ However, as Thiselton points out, Meggitt himself acknowledges evidence is limited,⁶⁶⁰ and Holmberg argues that Meggitt dismisses evidence that points to socio-economic diversity.⁶⁶¹ Thiselton notes that while Meggitt makes important points, for example the way the '*plebs urbana* lived on the breadline',⁶⁶² this does not preclude differences in social standing within, nor the presence of some more affluent Christians in the Corinthian church.⁶⁶³ As Horrell

⁶⁵³ Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 330.

⁶⁵⁴ Horrell, *Ethos*, 96.

⁶⁵⁵ Horrell, *Ethos*, 95. Also Clarke, *Leadership*, 59–68.

⁶⁵⁶ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 117.

⁶⁵⁷ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 114. There are various arguments about the make up of the early church as a whole. Chow, *Patronage*, 11–27 summarises the history of the arguments about the make up of the early church and the Corinthian Church specifically. Meeks points out the new consensus that there was more social diversity in the early Christian church (Meeks, *Christians*, 52) and notes that 65 people are mentioned by name in the letters of Paul or his disciples with another 13 names in Acts which show a diversity of backgrounds (55–6) .

⁶⁵⁸ Meggitt, *Paul*, 73.

⁶⁵⁹ Meggitt, *Paul*, 106.

⁶⁶⁰ Thiselton, *Epistle*, 25; Meggitt, 'Sources,' 252.

⁶⁶¹ Bengt Holmberg, 'Methods of Historical Reconstruction,' in Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, eds, *Christianity at Corinth. The Quest for the Pauline Church*, London: Westminster John Knox, 2004, 255–71, citing 263.

⁶⁶² Thiselton, *Epistle*, 183.

⁶⁶³ Thiselton, *Epistle*, 26.

points out, Meggitt's hypothesis is too binary.⁶⁶⁴ While there may not have been elites who were part of the Corinthian congregation, there could have been better off members.⁶⁶⁵ Longenecker's careful analysis of named individuals in the Corinthian congregation shows a variety of economic backgrounds though not members of the top elite.⁶⁶⁶

As well as the diversity of economic background, there is also evidence of other aspects of social diversity and social tensions.⁶⁶⁷ When Paul arrives in Corinth, he preaches at the synagogue (Acts 18.5) and Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his household believe (Acts 18.8). Priscilla and Aquila are also Jews (Acts 18.2). Horrell suggests that Apollos and Cephas' visits may have increased the number of Jewish converts.⁶⁶⁸ Paul also spends time at the house of Titius Justus, *σεβομένου τὸν θεόν*. Thiselton notes that Paul refers to those who are prominent in Roman, Greek and Jewish society.⁶⁶⁹ However Paul is also able to write to the Corinthians that they were idolators before coming to faith in Jesus (12.2).

In addition to the evidence of a mix of Jews, godfearers and pagans, there is also evidence of different factions with different leaders. Paul refers to different people aligning themselves with different leaders (1.12; 3.4) and to quarrels and disputes (3.3). As Chow points out, 'The problem does not appear to be between Apollos and Paul',⁶⁷⁰ as Paul sees Apollos as a fellow-worker (3.9) and is in communication with Apollos (16.12). Chow suggests that individuals may have identified with different missionaries⁶⁷¹ sometimes linked to whoever baptised them (1.16).

Particular leaders may have been favoured by particular groups as a result of their 'philosopher' credentials which could have included their rhetorical skill and whether they accepted financial help. Paul's account of his own preaching as lacking rhetorical skill, itself uses rhetoric⁶⁷² and it may be that some of the

⁶⁶⁴ David G. Horrell, 'Domestic Space and Christian Meetings at Corinth: Imagining New Contexts and the Buildings East of the Theatre,' *NTS* 50 (2004) 349–69, citing 358.

⁶⁶⁵ Horrell, 'Space,' 357.

⁶⁶⁶ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 220–52.

⁶⁶⁷ Horrell, *Ethos*, 101.

⁶⁶⁸ Horrell, *Ethos*, 92.

⁶⁶⁹ Thiselton, *Epistle*, 28. Meeks argues that Paul's letters show 'no visible connection or even contact between them and the synagogues' (Meeks, *Christians*, 168).

⁶⁷⁰ Chow, *Patronage*, 103.

⁶⁷¹ Chow, *Patronage*, 94.

⁶⁷² Thiselton, *Epistle*, 43.

Corinthians sought and valued the rhetorical ability of the leader they identified with.⁶⁷³

Philosophers had four ways that they might be supported: charging fees, having a rich patron, begging and working.⁶⁷⁴ Some patrons may have felt that Paul was dishonouring them by refusing help, particularly if other leaders accepted help. Both Chow and Smith argue that if householders allowed a congregation to meet in their home, they may have seen themselves as patron to the church.⁶⁷⁵ Barrett notes Paul's lack of reference to a president of the shared meal or a treasurer (16.2) and argues that the Corinthian church in this period 'had no clearly marked form or structure'.⁶⁷⁶ This may be the case and the lack of a leadership structure could exacerbate the potential for different people to be competing for power.

We have seen a number of aspects of diversity within the Corinthian congregation: economic, religious and factions possibly linked to patronage. All three may have influenced the different opinions on eating εἰδωλοθύτων that Paul addresses in his letter. The different groups may have had different experiences of eating meat offered to idols and therefore associated it with different events. People of different social standing would have had different levels of engagement in wider society and thus different opportunities to be involved in wider society.

Chow points out that those who were patrons would probably have had responsibilities and ties with those who were pagans.⁶⁷⁷ Coutsoumpos notes that some may have had 'social or business responsibilities'⁶⁷⁸ that meant they would be invited to dinners or to shrines and suggests it is those who are richer who are continuing to eat meat offered to idols.⁶⁷⁹ Similarly Theissen argues that the rich would have needed to maintain social contacts to keep business.⁶⁸⁰ In contrast the poor may not have eaten meat often,⁶⁸¹ possibly only at cultic meals.⁶⁸² This might have placed those who were poorer in the position of associating eating meat with cultic meals. However Meggitt cites the presence of *popinae* or *ganae* (cookshops), which were popular and accessed by poorer people and sold stews that

⁶⁷³ Chow, *Patronage*, 104–105.

⁶⁷⁴ Chow, *Patronage*, 109.

⁶⁷⁵ Chow, *Patronage*, 110, Smith, *Symposium*, 177.

⁶⁷⁶ Barrett, *First*, 24.

⁶⁷⁷ Chow, 114.

⁶⁷⁸ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 93.

⁶⁷⁹ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 93.

⁶⁸⁰ G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982, 130–31.

⁶⁸¹ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 93.

⁶⁸² Theissen, *Setting*, 125–27.

included meat.⁶⁸³ Therefore Meggitt argues that meat was ‘a familiar enough part of everyday life of the “non-elite” that “numinous” qualities could not have been ascribed to it.’⁶⁸⁴ While Meggitt has shown the likelihood of the non-elite eating meat in particular contexts, nevertheless it is still possible that particular groups would have been more likely to eat certain types of meat in religious contexts.⁶⁸⁵

Other suggestions for some of the issues that factions gathered round are: Gnosticism, over-realised eschatology and tensions over the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15.⁶⁸⁶ Schmithals argues that the background to many of the issues was Gnosticism,⁶⁸⁷ however Winter argues that while there may have been some incipient Gnostic thought, full blown Gnosticism is not evident.⁶⁸⁸ Such incipient Gnosticism might be seen in the valuing of knowledge (8.1), the argument that all things were lawful (10.23) and areas where ‘The world is rejected in a theoretical way in order to profit from it in a practical’.⁶⁸⁹ Thiselton points out the evidence in 1 Corinthians does not make Gnosticism a necessary cause.⁶⁹⁰ It may be that over-realised eschatology is partly what Paul is addressing in 1 Corinthians 4⁶⁹¹ as he argues that leadership is less ‘have it all’ (4.8) and more ‘commit it all’ (4.10–13). It is also possible that some Corinthians may have focused more on their past experience of transformation, so their resurrection focus was no longer in the future.⁶⁹² Through 1 Corinthians Paul emphasises that the Corinthians have ‘not yet arrived’ and the need for ongoing effort and commitment, as well as the interim nature of the Lord’s Supper.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸³ Justin J. Meggitt, ‘Meat Consumption and Social Conflict in Corinth,’ *JTS* n.s.45 (1994) 137–41, citing 138.

⁶⁸⁴ Meggitt, ‘Meat,’ 140.

⁶⁸⁵ Witherington argues that the rich may have used dining rooms at the temple for other occasions and that the poor would generally have associated meat with religious occasions (Witherington, *Conflict*, 188, 190).

⁶⁸⁶ Jamir suggests range of possibilities based on the issues addressed in the letter ‘A freedom party (5.2); ascetics (chap. 7), pneumatics (chap. 12) and sceptics (15.12–19).’ (Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 132)

⁶⁸⁷ Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1971, 218–58.

⁶⁸⁸ Winter, *Paul*, 25.

⁶⁸⁹ Theissen, *Setting*, 136.

⁶⁹⁰ Anthony C. Thiselton, ‘Realized Eschatology at Corinth,’ *NTS* 24 (1978) 510–526, citing 525.

⁶⁹¹ Thiselton, *Epistle*, 345, 357.

⁶⁹² Thiselton, ‘Eschatology,’ 524. In contrast, Tomlin suggests an Epicurean background for the issues around the resurrection, food and sex (Graham Tomlin, ‘Christians and Epicureans in 1 Corinthians,’ *JSNT* 68 (1997) 51–72 citing 57–65). He also argues that the Eucharist could have been seen as a funerary meal (Tomlin, ‘Christians,’ 66). However as argued in §4.2.1.1 this seems unlikely.

⁶⁹³ Thiselton, ‘Eschatology,’ 519, 522.

It is not clear how the debates over eating meat offered to idols relate to the Apostolic decree of Acts 15. Paul does not mention the decree in his discussion of the issue. Coutsoumpos suggests that the debate is ‘connected to outside attempts to introduce the Apostolic Decree into the Corinthian Church’.⁶⁹⁴ Similarly Winter suggests that Paul may have had an ‘unguarded emphasis’ on freedom and then after the Jerusalem council⁶⁹⁵ his initial letter (referred to in 5.9) was an attempt to introduce the apostolic decree. Barrett thus posits that 1 Corinthians is Paul’s attempt to mediate between the decree and the freedom the Corinthians think they have.⁶⁹⁶

We have seen how ‘the Christian congregation in Corinth encompassed various groups and classes, many cultures, ethnic and social identities and thus various interests, customs, assumptions and stratification’.⁶⁹⁷ We now turn to considering 11.17–34: what is happening during the Lord’s Supper in Corinth, and Paul’s response.

4.4. First Corinthians 11.17–34

4.4.1. *What is Happening in the Corinthian Church?*

In the second half of 1 Cor 11 Paul addresses what is happening when the church meets to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Paul has heard reports from the church (11.18)⁶⁹⁸ and writes to correct their practice and remind them of what they are celebrating.

The issue concerns how the Corinthians eat the Lord’s Supper when they gather together. In eating together as they met, early Christians were doing something that most groups in the ancient world would have done as they met together.⁶⁹⁹ Horrell suggests that the Corinthians probably would have met weekly,⁷⁰⁰ which would fit with the reference to the first day of every week in 16.2. How they met would have been important, therefore Paul would have addressed

⁶⁹⁴ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 90.

⁶⁹⁵ Winter, *Paul*, 26.

⁶⁹⁶ Barrett, *First*, 7.

⁶⁹⁷ Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 118.

⁶⁹⁸ Possibly from Chloe’s people if περὶ δέ does introduce issues raised in the Corinthian’s letter (Horrell, *Ethos*, 90; J. C. Hurd, *The Origins of 1 Corinthians*, London: SPCK, 1965, 63; Thiselton, *Epistle*, 35), but note Margaret M. Mitchell, ‘Concerning Περί δέ in 1 Corinthians,’ *NovT* 31 (1989) 229–256.

⁶⁹⁹ Smith, *Symposium*, 174, 279. See §4.2.1.1, §4.2.1.2.

⁷⁰⁰ Horrell, *Ethos*, 80.

‘proper procedure and protocol at the table’⁷⁰¹ and would have established it ‘during his mission to Corinth’.⁷⁰²

The Corinthians gather together (συνέρχομαι).⁷⁰³ Meeks argues that Paul’s use of κατ’ οἶκον (16.19) suggests that ‘individual household-based groups’⁷⁰⁴ may have met which then came together as a larger group, ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (11.18), ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό (11.20) and ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅλη ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό (14.23). It should be noted that 16.19 refers to a household community not in Corinth, but rather where Paul is as he writes. However the references to households within the Corinthian church – τὸν Στεφανῶν οἶκον (1.16) and τῶν Χλόης (1.11) – do support a model where individual worshipping households may then have gathered together. Crossan and Reed suggest that such gatherings of households or assemblies would have taken place in one of the bigger houses.⁷⁰⁵ It is possible that different households constituted different factions within the Corinthian church.⁷⁰⁶

As these different households come together, Meeks identifies four aspects to the celebration: common meal, imitation of Jesus’ last meal, commemorating his death on their behalf and eschatological expectation.⁷⁰⁷ However all is not well as the Corinthians gather, in fact, Paul can go as far as saying: Τοῦτο δὲ παραγγέλλων οὐκ ἐπαίνῳ (11.17). The issue is serious because the ‘congregation of brothers precisely in their gathering for worship, presents a shameless picture of social cleavage’.⁷⁰⁸ It is possible that those who were better off were treating the meeting as a private party and that ‘the social stratification of the congregation was overemphasized and exacerbated’.⁷⁰⁹ As Crossan and Reed point out important people in the congregation could be ‘very good for help, support, and protection, but also very bad for unity, equality, and commonality’.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰¹ Blue, ‘Church,’ 225.

⁷⁰² Horrell, *Ethos*, 87.

⁷⁰³ Blue notes that συνέρχομαι is used five times in 1 Cor. 11.17–34 and has only three other occurrences in Paul, all in 1 Corinthians (Blue, ‘Church,’ 225).

⁷⁰⁴ Meeks, *Christians*, 75.

⁷⁰⁵ Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 340.

⁷⁰⁶ See §6.5.8 and Edward Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places. Almost Exclusively Houses?*, London/ New York: Bloomsbury, 2013 for other ways Christians may have met together.

⁷⁰⁷ Meeks, *Christians*, 158.

⁷⁰⁸ Günter Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, London: SCM, 1969, 126.

⁷⁰⁹ Witherington, *Conflict*, 241.

⁷¹⁰ Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 338.

In the process of the Corinthians eating together ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ, ὃς δὲ μεθύει. (11.21). As Meeks points out this implies that there is a proper meal taking place.⁷¹¹ This is supported by the way the tradition Paul conveys speaks of μετὰ τὸ δειπνῆσαι (11.25). One of the key words for understanding what is going on is προλαμβάνω (11.21), which then has implications for interpreting ἐκδέχομαι in verse 33.⁷¹² There are three main ways of interpreting προλαμβάνω: a temporal meaning, a temporal and spatial meaning and an intensive meaning: devouring.

Witherington argues that προλαμβάνω has a temporal force: the rich eat earlier and the poor then arrive at the meal at the συμπόσιον stage.⁷¹³ Surburg also argues for a temporal meaning, but sees the situation as involving ‘a multifaceted and interrelated complex of issues that included where people ate, what they ate, how much they ate, and *when they ate*.’⁷¹⁴

Theissen asserts a temporal and spatial meaning. He argues that before the words of institution food is private and that some people are starting earlier.⁷¹⁵ Jamir argues that some people are going ahead, but that there is a lack of sharing even when there is concurrent eating.⁷¹⁶ It may be as Johnson suggests, that people were in different parts of the villa, giving spatial as well as temporal divisions.⁷¹⁷

The third option is to see the προ as strengthening the verb and therefore Winter suggests ‘devour’.⁷¹⁸ Winter goes on to argue that its use with ‘the aorist articular infinitive is meant to convey the idea in 11:21, that it was during the meal that each took or devoured his own dinner.’⁷¹⁹ Surburg argues that προ does not tend to be used for strengthening in verbal contexts⁷²⁰ and that the example from Asclepius that Winter uses (*SIG* §1170, 11.7,9,16) could also have a temporal meaning.⁷²¹ Most of the evidence is for a temporal meaning and ‘devour’ seems less persuasive, however the presence of the ‘ἐν τῷ + infinitive’ form suggests a

⁷¹¹ Meeks, *Christians*, 158. Also Wolfgang Schrage, *Der Erste Brief an die Korinther*, 4 vols, Zurich: Benziger, 1991–2001, 3:12.

⁷¹² Garland summarises the key scholars who support each of the options (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 540).

⁷¹³ Witherington, *Conflict*, 195.

⁷¹⁴ Mark P. Surburg, ‘The Situation at the Corinthian Lord's Supper in Light of 1 Corinthians 11:21: A Reconsideration,’ *Concordia* (2006) 17–37, citing 17.

⁷¹⁵ Theissen, *Setting*, 151.

⁷¹⁶ Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 136.

⁷¹⁷ Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, Leicester: IVP, 2004, 202–203.

⁷¹⁸ Winter, *Paul*, 148.

⁷¹⁹ Winter, *Paul*, 149.

⁷²⁰ Surburg, ‘Situation,’ 29.

⁷²¹ Surburg, ‘Situation,’ 25. Winter, *Paul*, 145.

contemporaneous time,⁷²² so that the taking of what is seen as τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον happens during the collective eating. This suggests a nuanced meaning, which could allude to time, but also to ‘taking before’ during the meal.

There are various ways this distinction between people and meal could be happening. There are three main ways that meals could be provided: those coming could bring food, those hosting could provide food, or those coming could bring money to contribute to the expense of the meal.⁷²³ If those hosting were providing the food, they may have treated the meal like any other meal which they hosted and distinguished between guests by where they sat them and what they gave them to eat. If a patron / householder was providing the food, it may not have seemed unusual for him to make social distinctions in the quality and quantity of the food provided.⁷²⁴ Even if several richer believers provided the bulk of the food, they may not have seen the discrepancies in quantity as an issue, rather they may have seen themselves as providing for the poor.⁷²⁵

If the context was people bringing food or money for a shared meal, the background of Greek meals was one where more food, at least for officials was the norm.⁷²⁶ This could mean that both the size and quality of the food could still be at issue here. Crossan and Reed argue ‘early Christians brought whatever they had and shared it among one another’,⁷²⁷ not just at Corinth, but also more widely, for example in Thessalonica. Both Bruce and Schottroff⁷²⁸ agree that the context and form of the meal was a bring and share meal, but that actually they brought and did not share, so that ‘the poor were not only unsatisfied but embarrassed and humiliated’.⁷²⁹ While Smith argues against bring and share on the basis that even the poorest would be able to bring enough bread to feed themselves,⁷³⁰ this does not seem conclusive as the disparity in food could still be considerable.

Another potential issue in a bring and share situation would be the possibility of Jewish and Gentile Christians eating together,⁷³¹ where what each group were

⁷²² Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, 595.

⁷²³ Chow highlights the first two possibilities (Chow, *Patronage*, 111).

⁷²⁴ Meeks, *Christians* 68, 159.

⁷²⁵ Horrell, *Ethos*, 103.

⁷²⁶ Theissen, *Setting*, 153.

⁷²⁷ Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 339.

⁷²⁸ Luise Schottroff, ‘Holiness and Justice: Exegetical Comments on 1 Corinthians 11.17-34,’ *JSNT* 79 (2000) 51-60, citing 53.

⁷²⁹ F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, London: Oliphants, 1971, 110. Also Barrett, *First*, 263.

⁷³⁰ Barry D. Smith, ‘The Problem with the Observance of the Lord's Supper in the Corinthian Church,’ *BBR* 20 (2010) 517-44, citing 533.

⁷³¹ Barrett, *First*, 261.

happy to eat might be different. If one group were a minority or less well off, they could end up being able to partake of less of the food.

Winter notes that one would expect sharing within a family, but the Corinthians have their own private meal,⁷³² suggesting that they have not understood the familial nature of the bonds between them as Christians.

If the church met in a villa-type house such as the Anaploga villa,⁷³³ there would not have been room for the whole church in the dining room,⁷³⁴ so they may have followed the norm where important guests were in the dining room and others elsewhere.⁷³⁵ Smith notes that 14.30 shows participants sitting rather than reclining and this might fit with a situation where there were more people than could easily fit to recline.⁷³⁶ It is unclear whether all would have met for this section of proceedings in the atrium, or whether everyone would have crowded into the triclinium.

However, more recent research has questioned whether the Corinthians would necessarily have met in a villa-style house.⁷³⁷ Horrell argues that the Anaploga villa was adapted and the excavated set-up is later than often assumed.⁷³⁸ Gehring suggests an alternative meeting place would have been a workshop style taberna, such as that where Prisca and Aquila are likely to have lived and worked.⁷³⁹ Adams suggests the church may have rented space, for example dining rooms,⁷⁴⁰ although Fotopoulos argues that as the church was not yet established they would not have been able to rent space.⁷⁴¹ Horrell points to the lack of firm evidence of where early Christians may have met and particularly the lack of evidence about poorer housing.⁷⁴²

⁷³² Winter, *Paul*, 158.

⁷³³ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St Paul's Corinth. Texts and Archaeology*, 3rd edn, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2002, 178–85.

⁷³⁴ Crossan and Reed note that houses excavated at Corinth include one with a *triclinium* for 9 and an *atrium* which would have accommodated 2–3 dozen (Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 315).

⁷³⁵ Witherington, *Conflict*, 241; Thiselton, *Shorter*, 182.

⁷³⁶ Smith, *Symposium*, 178.

⁷³⁷ Adams, *Places*; see also §6.5.8.

⁷³⁸ Horrell, 'Space,' 353–54.

⁷³⁹ Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission. The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004, 134–35.

⁷⁴⁰ Adams, *Places*, 166–71.

⁷⁴¹ John Fotopoulos, 'Greco-Roman Dining, the Lord's Supper, and Communion in the Body of Christ,' in Jacques Schlosser, ed. *Paul et l'Unité des Chrétiens*, [Leuven]: Peeters, 2010, 141–60, citing 152.

⁷⁴² Horrell, 'Space,' 359–60. He suggests that they may have met in a building such as the East Theater Street Complex (361–68).

However, even if the Corinthians were not meeting in a villa-style house, there could still have been issues with socio-economic distinctions. Walter notes that meals were an opportunity to show and compete for honour and status⁷⁴³ and McRae points to the hierarchy in evidence during VA meals.⁷⁴⁴

As the Corinthians met and ate together, they shared together the bread and the cup. There is some discussion about how the meal, the bread and the cup fit together. One group of scholars argues that after the blessing, the bread is shared, then the meal eaten, after which the cup is shared (Bread, Meal, Cup – BMC);⁷⁴⁵ the other group argues that both the bread and the cup come after or towards the end of the meal (Meal, Bread, Cup – MBC).⁷⁴⁶

The MBC option potentially explains why the Corinthians were unconcerned about the discrimination in the provision of food if ‘they so completely regarded this [the bread and cup] as the main thing that the preceding meal became a thing which one could shape according to his own likes and for his own enjoyment.’⁷⁴⁷ However the BMC option seems a more likely order as it fits with the tradition that Paul cites and he does not indicate that the order of eating is an issue for the Corinthians (11.25). This order also fits with the Graeco Roman meal pattern of bread to begin and wine to transition to the συμπόσιον. Yet it is possible that people arrived over time and this could have led to a situation that did not fully fit in either BMC or MBC⁷⁴⁸ and which had some fluidity, for example if it was bring and share, how many people needed to be there for them to bless the bread and start?

In whatever precise order the elements of the meal occurred, Paul criticises how the Corinthians eat together.⁷⁴⁹ For Paul, even if the issues are in the meal prior to the bread and wine, he sees a problem as he ‘considers the whole of the fellowship meal as the “Lord’s Supper”’.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴³ James C. Walters, ‘Paul and the Politics of Meals in Roman Corinth,’ in Steven J. Friesen, Daniel N. Schowalter and James C. Walters, eds, *Corinth in Context. Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*, Leiden/ Boston: Brill, 2010, 343–64, citing 356.

⁷⁴⁴ McRae, ‘Eating,’ 171.

⁷⁴⁵ Surburg, ‘Situation,’ 19. Also Ernst Käsemann, ‘Guests of the Crucified,’ *WW* 33 (2013) 62–73, citing 63.

⁷⁴⁶ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 109 (Coutsoumpos argues for a main meal before the blessing and then sacramental meal between bread and cup); Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 134; Bornkamm, *Christian*, 128; Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 195, 199.

⁷⁴⁷ Bornkamm, *Christian*, 128. Also Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 151.

⁷⁴⁸ Schrage, *Brief*, 3:14–15. Schrage provides two further possible orders.

⁷⁴⁹ See §4.4.4.1.

⁷⁵⁰ Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 134.

4.4.2. *How Does Famine Fit with This, Who Are the Have Nots?*

Paul refers in 11.22 to τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας, who are being shamed by the way the Corinthians are sharing (or not sharing). This group presumably was vulnerable in some sense whether financially, in terms of power, or in terms of their ability to respond to their situation.⁷⁵¹ Blue argues that free labourers would be more vulnerable than slaves, as free labourers would have been the first to lose their employment, especially in times of famine.⁷⁵²

If there were a famine, those who were free labourers may have been more vulnerable and the rich may have been reluctant to share because they saw no need to provide if a *curator annonae* had been appointed.⁷⁵³

A person's relationship with either their patron or the householder may also have influenced the situation, and Jamir argues that someone could be without because 'the patron assigned them a lesser amount of food'.⁷⁵⁴ Alternatively the μὴ ἔχοντας could be those not connected to a patron.⁷⁵⁵

4.4.3. *Other Background Issues*

As well as the Graeco-Roman context, which we have considered, there are other questions about what is going on as the Corinthians meet to share the Lord's Supper together.

4.4.3.1. *Idol Meat*

First, do the questions about εἰδωλόθυτον influence what is happening at the Lord's Supper? One of the issues of conflict and discussion at Corinth involves idol meat, whether meat that has been offered to idols, then sold later in the market, or idol meat consumed at temples during a ceremony. We look briefly at the passages which relate to idol meat in §4.5. If, as seems likely, some Corinthians saw no issues with eating meat which had been offered to idols and others did see an issue, and if the meal at the Lord's Supper was of a bring and share variety, the questions about idol meat may have directly impacted the Lord's Supper. Some believers, who had no issue with idol meat, may have brought it to share at the Lord's Supper.

⁷⁵¹ We have seen already the references to Claudius Dinippus providing in Corinth during periods of famine or food shortage (*Corinth* 8.3.158-163) and 1 Corinthians 7.26 refers to τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην which could conceivably be a food shortage.

⁷⁵² Blue, 'Church,' 233-235.

⁷⁵³ Blue, 'Church,' 238. See §3.3.3.

⁷⁵⁴ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 130.

⁷⁵⁵ Meggitt argues the 'have nots' do not have the bread and wine as he does not see it as an economic reference, partly as he argues it is used elsewhere with an object (Meggitt, *Paul*, 118-20). However there could be an implied object.

If others could not, on account of their consciences, eat the meat, they may then have gone hungry, particularly if those who had no issue with the meat were those who were more affluent and in a position to provide a greater proportion of the food for the meal.

4.4.3.2. *Why now?*

Secondly, why does the Lord's Supper become an issue at this point for the Corinthian church? Given that Paul was the person who had preached at Corinth and then spent some time there, presumably teaching (Acts 18.18), why did issues arise around the sharing of the Lord's Supper: had Paul not addressed the issue? If he had taught about how to share the Lord's Supper, why were there issues for the Corinthian Church now? Blue asserts that Paul would have addressed the issue, but argues that the context may have changed with the presence of food shortages.⁷⁵⁶ Crossan and Reed point to a clash between 'Paul's radical horizontal Christian equality... with Roman society's normal vertical hierarchy'.⁷⁵⁷ Winter suggests that the issue may not have arisen while Paul was there, or may have now arisen in a new way.⁷⁵⁸ The church would have continued to be surrounded by, and probably, in other contexts, participated in other ways of eating together. The draw to behave 'at this dinner in the same way as other Corinthians did at theirs'⁷⁵⁹ may have been strong, particularly as the church grew and new believers joined. In 11.17-34 Paul may be reminding the Corinthians of what he has already taught them.

4.4.4. *Paul's Response*

Having considered what may be happening as the Corinthians meet together, we now turn to consider Paul's response to them and as we do 'we shall learn something of what Paul expected or wanted the community to be like, and of his reactions to the reality.'⁷⁶⁰ As Paul responds to what he has heard of what is happening at the Lord's Supper, he criticises what is happening, provides catechesis about the nature of the Lord's Supper and instructions for how the Corinthians should act as they come together and share food.

⁷⁵⁶ Blue, 'Church,' 232, 237-8.

⁷⁵⁷ Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 296.

⁷⁵⁸ Winter, *Paul*, 4.

⁷⁵⁹ Winter, *Paul*, 142.

⁷⁶⁰ Horrell, *Ethos*, 125.

4.4.4.1. Criticism

Paul criticises the divisions that are apparent as they share food together, the way individual meals, as opposed to the Lord's Supper, are eaten and the way that some within the group go without and are humiliated. Paul has already referred to the divisions among the Corinthians in 1.10–12, although whether these divisions are the same divisions as those Paul now refers to in 11.18 is a matter of dispute.

Grosheide argues that the divisions in chapter 11 are not the same as those indicated in chapter 1. He argues that those in chapter 1 are around particular leaders and theology (1.12), while those in chapter 11 are based in the social differences within the community.⁷⁶¹ Theissen agrees and suggests that even if the group 'supports itself through mutual generosity, those who are able to contribute the most come to achieve a certain position of superiority – even if that does not correspond to the group's self-understanding'.⁷⁶²

Jamir suggests a wider set of divisions, based on the diversity of social and religious backgrounds of the believers.⁷⁶³ We have already noted the possibility of different beliefs about idol food contributing to division and some going hungry during the shared meal. A similar argument could be made if there were Jewish believers as part of the Corinthian church. If they were unable to eat much of what other believers brought to share, they may have gone hungry.⁷⁶⁴ Smith argues that when one considers the congregations at Antioch, Corinth and Rome, all evidence divisions at table and 'in all three cases, these divisions can be seen to be related to Jewish dietary laws'.⁷⁶⁵

Whether the divisions are between rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, those with a believing patron and those without a believing patron, allegiance to different leaders, or based on different theological approaches to topics, Paul is clear that there are divisions among the Corinthians. Blue highlights three comparisons which may indicate both the kind of divisions and the effect of the divisions:

⁷⁶¹ Grosheide, *Commentary*, 265.

⁷⁶² Theissen, *Setting*, 162.

⁷⁶³ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 112.

⁷⁶⁴ The Sardinian decree, recorded by Josephus (*Ant.* 14.259–261) indicates that 'kosher' meat was available in market places and Winter argues the presence of Jews and synagogue in Corinth mean that it is likely that such stalls were present in the Corinthian market (Winter, *Paul*, 295). However Winter also notes the increase in opposition and the possibility the removal of such markets may have been part of the outworking of such opposition (299). Even if 'kosher' meat were still available in the Corinthian market, it may not have been seen as a key issue for those believers who did not come from a Jewish background.

⁷⁶⁵ Smith, *Symposium*, 180.

between their homes (11.22) and the house church (11.18), between the Lord's Supper (11.20) and their own meals (11.21), and between those who have and those who have not (11.22). '[B]ehaviour which may be acceptable in the house (οἶκος/οἰκία, vv 22, 34) is not appropriate for the "church" (ἐκκλησία) when gathered in the house.'⁷⁶⁶

Behaviour that saw the meal as for themselves rather than a shared meal, the Lord's Supper, was not appropriate. Coutsoumpos suggests that the wealthy Christians could have seen the meal as their own,⁷⁶⁷ which may particularly have been the case if they were bringing larger contributions of the food, or food other than bread and wine.⁷⁶⁸ However it may not have been how they viewed the meal, but rather what they did during it, that leads Paul to say that they were eating their own meals. Coutsoumpos,⁷⁶⁹ Garland⁷⁷⁰ and Witherington⁷⁷¹ argue that the way that the believers ate, created and exacerbated divisions, which meant that 'Their behaviour was totally in contradiction with the nature and purpose of the meal.'⁷⁷² If those who were more wealthy used the meal to honour one group more than another, it could not be the Lord's Supper.⁷⁷³ 'Es gibt aber keine wahre *communio* am Tisch des Herren ohne *communio* mit dessen anderen Tischgenossen.'⁷⁷⁴ Their meal could hardly be the Lord's Supper when their actions showed contempt of God and those who God 'has called into his church' – the 'not many wise, not many mighty, not many nobly born'.⁷⁷⁵ As Witherington points out 'The Lord's Supper was meant as a sacrament of both horizontal and vertical communion'.⁷⁷⁶

Pervo argues that the distinction between ἴδιον and κυριακόν (11.20–21) is also one between personal and shared food⁷⁷⁷ and Schottroff similarly argues that the issues is that the better off 'have treated common property... as if it were private property... at a time when it was already common property, consecrated to God.'⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁶⁶ Blue, 'Church,' 227.

⁷⁶⁷ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 77.

⁷⁶⁸ Theissen, *Setting*, 153.

⁷⁶⁹ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 112.

⁷⁷⁰ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 533, 536.

⁷⁷¹ Witherington, *Conflict*, 241.

⁷⁷² Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 165.

⁷⁷³ Thiselton, *Shorter*, 182; Mitchell, 'Amen,' 260.

⁷⁷⁴ Schrage, *Brief*, 3:23.

⁷⁷⁵ Barrett, *First*, 262

⁷⁷⁶ Witherington, *Conflict*, 243.

⁷⁷⁷ Pervo, 'PANTA,' 169.

⁷⁷⁸ Schottroff, 'Holiness,' 54.

Eating their own meals as opposed to the Lord's Supper, led to divisions between the haves and the have nots,⁷⁷⁹ with the have nots being humiliated,⁷⁸⁰ social division being exacerbated⁷⁸¹ and their fellowship in Christ ignored.⁷⁸² 'Paul's accusation is that the meal that was supposed to be a sign of their integration and unity has become a flashpoint highlighting their inequality and alienation.'⁷⁸³

4.4.4.2. *Catechesis*

However Paul does not simply criticise the Corinthians for their behaviour as they gather and eat together, he also teaches them, passing on tradition, indicated by his use of παρέλαβον and παρέδωκα (11.23) (*qibbel* and *masar*).⁷⁸⁴

Paul indicates that the Corinthians already know this tradition – he has already passed it on to them (11.23). Bornkamm and Coutsoumpos argue that the Corinthians have not forgotten the tradition.⁷⁸⁵ After all they are still observing what they see as the Lord's Supper, even if Paul does not think that it is the Lord's Supper (11.20). Therefore, they have not forgotten or stopped the tradition, rather they have been mis-practising it.⁷⁸⁶

As we have seen, Paul presumes the Corinthians have an awareness of the tradition, Schottroff goes further to argue that Paul presumes the Corinthians are familiar with the blessings and prayers at a Jewish meal: that his restating of the tradition only includes those parts of the prayer that are pertinent to the situation.⁷⁸⁷ Paul has previously presumed a knowledge of Jewish practice (5.7) and his presentation of the tradition has parallels to the way the president explains parts of the meal in the Haggadah,⁷⁸⁸ which may suggest that he assumes a similar level of awareness here, but we lack evidence from the text to confirm this suggestion. Paul is not specific about the thanksgiving prayer that is to be used. It may be that he anticipates that the Corinthians will have a knowledge of Jewish thanksgiving prayers, but it may also be that different hearers would imagine different benedictions depending on their backgrounds.⁷⁸⁹

⁷⁷⁹ Blue, 'Church,' 226.

⁷⁸⁰ Witherington, *Conflict*, 249.

⁷⁸¹ Theissen, *Setting*, 160.

⁷⁸² Bruce, *Corinthians*, 115.

⁷⁸³ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 536.

⁷⁸⁴ Barrett, *First*, 265; Schrage, *Brief*, 3:29.

⁷⁸⁵ Bornkamm, *Christian*, 127; Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 124.

⁷⁸⁶ Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 124.

⁷⁸⁷ Schottroff, 'Holiness,' 52.

⁷⁸⁸ Thiselton, *Epistle*, 874.

⁷⁸⁹ Smith, *Symposium*, 190.

Paul reminds the Corinthians of Jesus' actions at the meal and encourages them to imitate Jesus' self-giving (11.26),⁷⁹⁰ remembering the meal, Jesus' death and the effect of his death. 'What the saying of the words over the bread and wine represents is the idea that with the sharing of the bread and the wine one is sharing in the result brought about by that death.'⁷⁹¹ Therefore 'Die Korinther müssen sich bewußt werden daß sie „Gäste des Gekreuzigten“ sind.'⁷⁹² Jamir notes that Jesus had brought people together around meals, and that Paul wants the Corinthian's meal to show community⁷⁹³ and unity with the Lord and each other.⁷⁹⁴ This emphasis on unity with God and one another as a result of Jesus' death could also be indicated in the slight change in order of words concerning the bread. In 1 Cor 11.24, Jesus says: Τοῦτό μου ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα, while in the gospels Jesus says: Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου (Luke 22.19; Matt 26.26; Mark 14.22). The location of the μου in 11.24 focuses more attention on the 'my',⁷⁹⁵ which could point to Jesus' body and death and its effect, and also to Jesus' body the church and its unity. The tradition of the Lord's Supper was founded on Jesus' words as he pointed to his own death and to its sacrifice as 'an act of divine deliverance by which sins were forgiven and a new covenant set up between God and men, who being reconciled to God, were now united among themselves.'⁷⁹⁶

However Paul does not simply reiterate the tradition, he also explains it and warns about possible judgment that as they eat they could be ἐνοχος, liable or chargeable for Jesus' death.⁷⁹⁷ This idea of eating judgment picks up the idea of eating as a covenant sign.⁷⁹⁸ Paul is clear that in the sharing of the bread and wine τὸν θάνατον τοῦ κυρίου καταγγέλλετε, ἄχρι οὗ ἔλθῃ (11.26).⁷⁹⁹ This

⁷⁹⁰ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 154.

⁷⁹¹ Smith, *Symposium*, 190.

⁷⁹² Klauck, *Herrenmahl*, 372.

⁷⁹³ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 156.

⁷⁹⁴ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 175.

⁷⁹⁵ Winter, *Paul*, 154.

⁷⁹⁶ Barrett, *First*, 272.

⁷⁹⁷ 'The syntax therefore *implies not a sacrilege against the elements of the Lord's Supper* but answerability or being **held accountable** for the sin against Christ of claiming identification with him while using the celebration of the meal *as an occasion for social enjoyment or status enhancement without regard to sharing in what the Lord's Supper proclaims.*' (Thiselton, *Epistle*, 890, his italics). Ramelli argues that the sickness in the judgment is spiritual rather than physical (Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, 'Spiritual Weakness, Illness, and Death in 1 Corinthians 11:30,' *JBL* 130 (2011) 145–63, citing 146–59).

⁷⁹⁸ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids/Nottingham: Eerdmans/ Apollos, 2010, 555.

⁷⁹⁹ For Barrett this includes all Christians sharing 'the benefits secured for them through the blood of Christ'. (Barrett, *First*, 232)

proclamation is one that happens in the eating and drinking as well as in the words.⁸⁰⁰ When they do not proclaim Jesus' death, whether by contradicting 'the purpose of Christ's self-offering' or 'the Spirit in which it was made',⁸⁰¹ as Paul thinks is currently happening,⁸⁰² 'they are on par with those who were responsible for the death of Christ.'⁸⁰³ However this judgment is a judgment that is remedial and educative (11.32),⁸⁰⁴ for as Bornkamm points out it 'redeems them from the world and excludes them from the final damnation.'⁸⁰⁵

4.4.4.3. *The Way Forward*

Having reminded the Corinthians of the nature of the meal they are sharing, what they are remembering and proclaiming and the danger of judgment if they do not proclaim Jesus' death, Paul then provides a way forward, so that they may appropriately share the Lord's Supper and not their own suppers. Paul's solution has three main elements: discerning the body, waiting and examining. We look at each of these in turn before considering Paul's comments about eating at home, and how they relate to possible love-patriarchalism (the argument that Paul keeps some of the patriarchal forms from society while tempering them with the belief of equality in Christ and agape-love).

In 11.29 Paul warns against *μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα* and therefore we see the implicit expectation that the Corinthians should discern the body. However to which body Paul is referring? We have already noted the link between Jesus' death and the unity with God and one another for believers, which is seen again in 12.13 as Paul talks about the believers as one body and in 12.27 as Paul points to the believers as *σῶμα Χριστοῦ*.

However there are other possibilities to consider. The *σῶμα* the believers are meant to discern could be about discerning the food remembering Jesus' death from ordinary food, the Lord's body in the bread and the way the elements represent Christ's death.⁸⁰⁶ Barrett argues against the body referring to the church because there is also mention of the cup in 11.27.⁸⁰⁷ However as we have seen above, Paul in other places in the letter uses body to describe the believers, particularly their

⁸⁰⁰ Barrett, *First*, 270. Thiselton, *Epistle*, 870.

⁸⁰¹ Barrett, *First*, 273.

⁸⁰² Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 549.

⁸⁰³ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 168.

⁸⁰⁴ Barrett, *First*, 276.

⁸⁰⁵ Bornkamm, *Christian*, 50.

⁸⁰⁶ Barrett, *First*, 274; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 552. Each gives three options which overlap.

⁸⁰⁷ Barrett, *First*, 273.

unity and equality. Thus body indicating the church would fit with Paul's concern with how the believers treat one another (11.22). Discerning the body would then involve the Corinthians having a responsibility towards one another⁸⁰⁸ and evaluating 'their relationships to others in the church when they observe the Lord's Supper.'⁸⁰⁹

The identification of the body to be discerned with the church does not preclude other meanings. Jamir highlights what he sees as 'rhetorical word play'⁸¹⁰ in Paul's use of σῶμα: 'the σῶμα that has come into existence because of the σῶμα that was broken in sacrifice on their behalf.'⁸¹¹ Thus σῶμα is multivalent.⁸¹² Indeed Johnson sees the reference as including the 'Lord's own physical body, not as mystically present in the bread but in the saving significance of his death and the consequent social behavior of all who are identified with him'.⁸¹³

Having indicated that the Corinthians should be discerning the body, Paul also instructs them that when they meet together ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε (11.33). Ἐκδέχομαι can have various meanings including 'wait',⁸¹⁴ 'expect',⁸¹⁵ 'receive',⁸¹⁶ 'undertake'⁸¹⁷ and 'welcome'.⁸¹⁸ Winter asserts that the verb is used in 16.11 to indicate 'expecting' and that in 1.7 it is used with the prefix ἀπό to indicate waiting. He therefore argues that we would expect this second form in chapter 11 if it were indicating waiting.⁸¹⁹ However 16.11 could include a waiting meaning, and it seems likely this is the case here. This does not preclude an element of welcome or receiving of one another.⁸²⁰

⁸⁰⁸ Bornkamm, *Christian*, 149.

⁸⁰⁹ Chow, *Patronage*, 183. Indeed Barrett seems to follow Bornkamm in suggesting 'a "fellowship" use'. (Barrett, *First*, 275).

⁸¹⁰ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 198. Also Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1991, 157.

⁸¹¹ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 197.

⁸¹² Bach and Glancy, 'Morning,' 457.

⁸¹³ Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, 210; also Thiselton, *Shorter*, 187-8.

⁸¹⁴ BDAG, 300; MM, 192.

⁸¹⁵ BDAG, 300.

⁸¹⁶ MM, 192.

⁸¹⁷ MM, 192.

⁸¹⁸ Thiselton points out that it is used in Rom 15.7 for welcome (Thiselton, *Shorter*, 189). Also Surburg, 'Situation,' 36-37.

⁸¹⁹ Winter, *Paul*, 151.

⁸²⁰ 3 Macc 5.26 (LXX); Winter, *Paul*, 151.

As Barrett points out it is important to note that it is for one another that they are waiting,⁸²¹ not a particular person. The onus is on all of them to wait for everyone else. Paul does not give instructions to particular leaders or officers.

Surburg argues that just waiting does not deal with the problem,⁸²² but that including the idea of receiving or welcoming would ‘end the various ways the “haves” have shamed the “have-nots” – whether by the where, what, how much of the meal... or the *when*’.⁸²³ However there is one way in which the waiting could deal with the issue. If the issue at hand is a ‘pot luck’ meal before the Lord’s Supper to which only some are invited, only some come, or where the food is not fully shared, then waiting and starting any eating with the invocation with the bread could provide a solution.⁸²⁴

Whether ἐκδέχομαι solely indicates waiting in a context where some of the Corinthians had been holding a limited or discriminatory meal before the Lord’s Supper, or whether Paul uses the verb in the wider of sense of receiving and welcoming,⁸²⁵ the overall intention is the same. Paul is expressing his concern that the Corinthians should be eating together and equally, without particular people getting favoured in the distribution of food or drink. It is not surprising that Paul has to reiterate this, as for the Corinthian church this would be a pattern at odds with the patronage system of the world that they lived in.⁸²⁶

As well as discerning, and waiting / welcoming, Paul also urges the Corinthians δοκιμαζέτω δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτόν (11.28). This is in order that they may not be judged (11.29)⁸²⁷ and involves them making sure that they are not eating or drinking in a manner that is ἀναξίως (11.27). Ἀναξίως covers behaviour which is ‘in contrast with the character or nature of something’.⁸²⁸ Ciampa and Rosner argue that this indicates eating in a way that demeans or dishonours a brother or sister,⁸²⁹ because the brother or sister is holy.⁸³⁰ Paul does not here go as far as arguing from the holiness of the believers, but Paul does include criticising the Corinthians for humiliating members of the church (11.22) and indicate that the

⁸²¹ Barrett, *First*, 276.

⁸²² Surburg, ‘Situation,’ 37.

⁸²³ Surburg, ‘Situation,’ 37.

⁸²⁴ Crossan and Reed, *Search*, 340; Coutsoumpos, *Paul*, 50.

⁸²⁵ Blue, ‘Church,’ 231.

⁸²⁶ Mitchell, ‘Amen,’ 232.

⁸²⁷ Barrett, *First*, 276.

⁸²⁸ Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 164.

⁸²⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, *Letter*, 554.

⁸³⁰ Ciampa and Rosner, *Letter*, 51.

right approach of believers is to honour one another (12.23), because they are all part of one body, Christ's (12.12, 27).

This examining of self has often been seen to be an examination of 'moral worthiness',⁸³¹ but as Jamir argues Paul's focus here is not on introspection with regard to 'moral worthiness', but rather 'an introspection of one's attitude and motive at the Supper, and then one's action towards fellow members in the community',⁸³² so that they conform 'to the gospel message that they proclaim through partaking in the Supper'.⁸³³ Their examination is to be of the way they approach the meal and one another in the light of Christ's sacrifice for all.⁸³⁴

Paul's next comments in verse 34 seem to potentially undermine his focus on sharing and equality between believers. Conzelmann argues that Paul's instruction εἴ τις πεινᾷ, ἐν οἴκῳ ἐσθιέτω (11.34) separates satisfying hunger from the sacrament.⁸³⁵ Others see Paul as criticising those whose sole motive is their hunger, i.e. if they are only coming because they are hungry, they should rather eat at home,⁸³⁶ or if they 'are so hungry that they cannot wait'⁸³⁷ or if they are only coming because of the food,⁸³⁸ then they should rather eat at home, so that when they come together hunger is not the issue.⁸³⁹

Bach and Glancy and Theissen suggest food may not be being shared because it is not part of the words of institution and Paul is thus limiting what is eaten when they gather.⁸⁴⁰ Grosheide sees the situation as one where both a love feast and the Lord's Supper are taking place. The love feast is optional and the way that the Corinthians are celebrating it is then spoiling the Lord's Supper and thus he argues that they should eat at home.⁸⁴¹

However Paul's account of the Last Supper points to its background as a Jewish meal, and there are elements of his description which suggest a Passover background.⁸⁴² Schottroff argues that, while many modern scholars and the church

⁸³¹ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 194.

⁸³² Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 193.

⁸³³ Jamir, 'Exclusion,' 194.

⁸³⁴ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 551. Also Thiselton, *Epistle*, 880, 893.

⁸³⁵ Conzelmann, *Corinthians*, 195.

⁸³⁶ Bornkamm, *Christian*, 129; Grosheide, *Commentary*, 277; Bruce, *Corinthians*, 116.

⁸³⁷ Barrett, *First*, 277.

⁸³⁸ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 555.

⁸³⁹ Ciampa and Rosner, *Letter*, 559.

⁸⁴⁰ Bach and Glancy, 'Morning,' 456; Theissen, *Setting*, 155.

⁸⁴¹ Grosheide, *Commentary*, 268.

⁸⁴² Paul's use of Paschal Lamb, the use of wine and the fact that the meal was in the evening (11.23) (I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, Exeter: Paternoster, 1980, 59-64).

tend to separate the meal from the sharing of the bread and wine, in Jewish tradition ‘the blessing over bread embraced all the foodstuffs that were on the table’.⁸⁴³ This would suggest a situation where Paul would be able to argue that what was brought should be shared. Similarly within the tradition which Paul passes on to the Corinthians, it is clear that there is a supper and Paul in verse 33 still envisages them eating together: συνερχόμενοι εἰς τὸ φαγεῖν ἀλλήλους ἐκδέχεσθε.

Other scholars argue that Paul is providing a half-way house, an option that allows those who are strong / rich to continue their own lifestyle privately.⁸⁴⁴ Thus Pervo argues that Paul does not try to persuade the strong / rich to give up their lifestyles ‘so much as not to flaunt them’.⁸⁴⁵ If the rich want to eat ‘on their own terms’, they should do it in their own homes or those of friends.⁸⁴⁶ Thus Pervo and Theissen both see Paul arguing that the rich can eat what they want, but only at home, something Theissen sees as being a response of ‘love-patriarchalism’.⁸⁴⁷ In doing this, Smith argues, Paul is no different from other Graeco-Roman moralists and gives the example of Plutarch *Quaest. conv.* 616C.⁸⁴⁸

However this argument does not fit very well with Paul’s assertion that they are one body (12.12) and his concern elsewhere in the letter for how they behave outside of the times that they gather together (5.1; 6.1). Therefore it may be that Paul is not necessarily presenting an option for them to use, but rather further criticism of how they have been observing the Lord’s Supper. If hunger was the excuse⁸⁴⁹ some of the congregation were giving either for going ahead with the meal, or for eating more of the meal, Paul’s comment then potentially highlights the way they are using it as an excuse by showing them an obvious alternative approach. He is then not intending them to eat at home rather to recognise their excuse and therefore eat and share together.⁸⁵⁰

Similarly Paul could be using irony. Margaret Sim observes Paul’s frequent use of irony to address the issues that have arisen among them and argues that irony should be considered if a phrase seems to be contradicting what we know of Paul’s

⁸⁴³ Schottroff, ‘Holiness,’ 56.

⁸⁴⁴ Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 264.

⁸⁴⁵ Pervo, ‘PANTA,’ 165.

⁸⁴⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *Letter*, 546.

⁸⁴⁷ Theissen, *Setting*, 139; Pervo, ‘PANTA,’ 166.

⁸⁴⁸ Smith, *Symposium*, 193.

⁸⁴⁹ Schottroff, ‘Holiness,’ 53; Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 202.

⁸⁵⁰ Jamir, ‘Exclusion,’ 202–3

views.⁸⁵¹ If those who were wealthier thought they were feeding the needy, Paul's comment could be ironically highlighting the fact that they think they are feeding the needy, but they are using their own hunger as an excuse for the inequality and should know that those who are really hungry cannot eat at home in the same way.

We have considered 11.17-34, the issues within the Corinthian church as they celebrated the Lord's Supper: when they were meant to be sharing, some were going hungry; what was meant to be unifying divided. We have noted a number of possible divisions and causes. Paul criticises the divisions, individualism and lack of fellowship. He provides catechesis based on the Last Supper tradition, and the need for the Corinthians' actions to be consonant with Jesus' self-giving and with their new-found identity. He then provides instruction for the way forward: they are to discern the body and wait for / receive one another. We see in Paul's response to the Corinthians his expectation that they should share food with one another. Before we compare Paul's expectations of how the Corinthians should share food with meal practice in the surrounding culture, we will consider other texts in 1 Corinthians which may add to the picture.

4.5. Other Texts

We now turn to other texts in 1 Corinthians which may help us interpret what is happening in Corinth as they share food together and what Paul is advocating in 1 Cor 11.17-34.

In chapters 8 and 10, Paul addresses issues around eating food sacrificed to idols. Paul presents a nuanced argument, which agrees that it is possible to eat food sacrificed to idols without harm (8.8), but that such food should not be eaten if it will affect others with a weak conscience (8.10). However Paul is much firmer around the possibility of sharing in a sacrifice to demons (10.21), possibly in the instance of eating at a ceremony at a temple, in comparison to eating meat offered to idols at someone's house (10.27) or eating at a temple but not part of a sacrifice (8.10).⁸⁵² His argument is that such sharing in a sacrifice implies partnership (10.20) and that Christians cannot have partnership with both Christ and demons (10.21).

⁸⁵¹ Margaret Sim, 'Recognising Irony in the Corinthian Correspondence,' Paper presented at London School of Theology Research Conference, March 2012.

⁸⁵² Newton assesses the evidence for temple dining rooms and notes the possibility at Asklepios of the dining rooms accommodating those who had not been involved in sacrifices (Derek Newton, *Deity and Diet. The Dilemma of Sacrificial Food at Corinth*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, 91-98).

There is obviously disagreement among the Corinthians about what is appropriate with respect to eating food offered to idols and discussion about the extent to which meat, whether in the temple, or in the market would have been sacrificed to idols.⁸⁵³ Part of the issue may be related to the Corinthians' understanding of the reality or otherwise of idols.⁸⁵⁴ Newton also questions whether Paul and the Corinthians saw εἰδωλον differently.⁸⁵⁵ Who the weak are in Paul's discussion is less clear. Theissen argues that 'the socially weak of 1.26-27 are identical with those who are weak in the face of consecrated meat.'⁸⁵⁶ His argument is two pronged. The poor would have had fewer opportunities to eat meat and therefore may have identified it more strongly with idol worship,⁸⁵⁷ as public sacrifices may have been the only time they got to eat meat.⁸⁵⁸ However *popinae* and *ganae* would have provided opportunities for the poor to eat meat.⁸⁵⁹ While the rich would have had more opportunities and more varied opportunities to eat meat,⁸⁶⁰ they may also have had more need to frequent temples which 'incorporated banking, markets, museums, libraries, landmarks and meeting places.'⁸⁶¹ The wealthy may have been more dependent on participating in such meals in order to maintain their status and connections. These may have included marriages, funerals and civic religious ceremonies, such as those surrounding the Isthmian Games or the imperial cult.⁸⁶² Such meals were opportunities to connect with the powerful and gain influence.⁸⁶³ Theissen suggests that Paul does not argue that all cultic meals should be avoided, but rather that 'All that is prohibited is disturbing a weak person by doing so'.⁸⁶⁴

However Theissen's view does not fully take into account Paul's argument about association in 1 Corinthians 10.14-22. In chapter 10 Paul draws upon the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness and argues that they experienced

⁸⁵³ Smith notes the issues around diet are not unique to Corinth (Smith, *Symposium*, 177). See Rom 14 and Acts 15.1-21.

⁸⁵⁴ Newton, *Deity*, 134. For example, they may have had different views of Roman imperial images (160-73) and whether the Roman cult involved worship or honouring (211). Similarly, was all of the food sacrificial or only the portions dedicated to the gods (195)?

⁸⁵⁵ Newton, *Deity*, 278-82.

⁸⁵⁶ Theissen, *Setting*, 125.

⁸⁵⁷ Theissen, *Setting*, 128; also Witherington, *Conflict*, 190.

⁸⁵⁸ Theissen, *Setting*, 128.

⁸⁵⁹ See §4.3.

⁸⁶⁰ Theissen, *Setting*, 125-8.

⁸⁶¹ Newton, *Deity*, 299.

⁸⁶² Chow, *Patronage*, 146-50.

⁸⁶³ Chow, *Patronage*, 151, 156.

⁸⁶⁴ Theissen, *Setting*, 139.

judgment even though they had been baptized into the cloud and the sea (10.2, 5). Paul warns the Corinthians that neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper gives them a *carte blanche* to do whatever they will. Specifically Paul tells them that sharing the cup of the Lord is incompatible with sharing the cup of demons (10.21). Sharing the Lord's Supper involves sharing with other believers, but also participation in Christ,⁸⁶⁵ and sharing in his death.⁸⁶⁶

Paul argues that partaking of the Lord's Supper is 'no guarantee against falling into sin'.⁸⁶⁷ It unites the person to Christ and therefore idolatry is treachery.⁸⁶⁸ Being united to Christ, unites them with one another.⁸⁶⁹ Therefore they should not be eating food offered to idols within worship contexts (10.14), but also they should be concerned about the welfare and conscience of their brothers and sisters with whom they have been united (8.12). In contexts where they are with unbelievers they should be concerned with the conscience of the unbeliever (10.28) and presumably the witness that their eating, or not eating provides. Meeks helpfully suggests that the distinction between when it is permissible to eat food offered to idols and when it is not, is dependent on the symbolism involved. When the meat has a symbolic connection to the idol, for example, when it is in the temple at a ceremony, when the belief of the weak makes it symbolic or when the cultic link is named, then there is an issue with consuming it.⁸⁷⁰

Paul also addresses the issue of the man living with his father's wife, which points to the Corinthians regularly eating with one another (5.11). Again it is possible that patronage may be involved. If the man is a rich patron,⁸⁷¹ this might explain why the church were ready to accept the man, for he would have been able to contribute to the wellbeing of the church and association with him may have brought advantages to the church. Paul's recommendation is that the Corinthians should not even eat with this man (5.11). Chow suggests that having their own court may have benefitted the weak⁸⁷² and may also have allowed for a freed man to

⁸⁶⁵ Ciampa and Rosner, *Letter*, 553.

⁸⁶⁶ Bornkamm therefore sees a difference between the references to body in verses 16 and 17 with the first referring to Jesus' death and the second to the believers as the body. (Bornkamm, *Christian*, 144).

⁸⁶⁷ Barrett, *First*, 234.

⁸⁶⁸ Barrett, *First*, 234.

⁸⁶⁹ Barrett, *First*, 234.

⁸⁷⁰ Meeks, *Christians*, 160.

⁸⁷¹ Chow, *Patronage*, 130.

⁸⁷² Chow, *Patronage*, 182.

address issues with a former patron. This would place believers on a more even standing as they related to one another.

We see from these passages further evidence of issues around food and of the Corinthians eating together, both direct evidence of eating together and also indirect (the issues around idol meat presume a level of knowledge about one another's eating habits and may indicate occasions of eating together).

4.6. The Example of Sharing in 1 Corinthians 11

We have considered the situation at the Lord's Supper in the Corinthian church, Paul's response of criticism, catechesis and presentation of a way forward, and other passages that add to our understanding of the relationships within the Corinthians church regarding food and patronage. We are now ready to summarise Paul's teaching about the Lord's Supper in the context of his wider teaching in 1 Corinthians.

Central to Paul's teaching to the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper is the way that as the Corinthians eat together they have communion and participation in Jesus Christ (10.16–17, 21). This participation and communion in Jesus is rooted in his death and in his self-giving (11.23–26). As the Passover lamb (5.7) Jesus brings them into communion with each other and the meal is a covenantal meal (11.27–29), where the covenant is based on Jesus' death (15.3) and brings communion with God and one another. Paul's concern is that the Corinthian's behaviour should be in character, rather than ἀναξίως (v.27), with the reality of the covenant meal they are eating and with the pattern of Jesus' self-giving that establishes the covenant.

In Jesus they are one body (10.17; 11.29; 12.12–14, 17, 27) and therefore should not be divided (1.10–12; 11.18), whatever their background, wherever they sit during the meal, whatever is happening. In fact Paul identifies divisions that involve quarrelling and jealousy with a lack of maturity (3.1–4; 12.21–26).

Paul argues for unity and for some sense of equality. He is clear that the church is made from people from different backgrounds and that there should not be social divisions within the congregation. He argues, for example, that leaders are not superior (3.5–9). He presents a model of eating together that is at odds with the cultural norm, as it involves both a wider variety of people eating together, and speaks against inequality and food becoming a measure of hierarchy or divisiveness within the community (11.21).

He emphasises that the Corinthians are each chosen by God and should therefore boast in God rather than in themselves (1.27–31) and each one of them has a part to play (12.4–7).

This unity and equality should lead to caring for one another. This is seen in sharing, so that one is not hungry and one drunk (11.21), so the meal is not ἴδιον, but rather κυριακόν, so that individuals are not humiliated (11.22), but rather honoured (12.23). This expected care and concern for one another is also seen in Paul's addressing of the wider food issues (chapters 8 and 10), in particular where he argues that individuals should not be a cause of stumbling to others within the community (8.9–13). Their concern should be the wellbeing of others. It is also seen in Paul's example through his ministry where he lays down his rights (9.19–23), which gives the Corinthians an example of what it might look like to follow the example of Jesus' self-giving. Likewise the Corinthians are to use their gifts to benefit each other (14.1–5, 26).⁸⁷³ Paul's chapter on love (13) also reiterates his desire that they should care for one another.

Paul's instruction to the Corinthians is based in his theology of what the meal is that they are sharing and who they are. They are people who are sharing in a covenantal meal, who are one body, called to proclaim the Lord's death (11.26) in their actions and their words. Therefore they are to share with one another and care for one another.

4.7. Specific Examples of Meals in the Graeco-Roman World

Having considered the evidence of what is happening in Corinth and Paul's response to the Corinthians, we now turn to look at specific examples of eating meals in the Graeco-Roman world to ascertain in what ways Paul's exhortation about how the Corinthians should eat together is similar to and different from contemporary meal practice. We have already examined some of the forms of meals and issues around patronage; this section will look at two examples of meals, which we will then use together with the more general evidence about shared meals as a comparator to what Paul is advocating.

First, we consider the evidence of by-laws of the Society of Diana and Antinous in Lanuvium, Italy. Here we discover that members pay to join, 'an

⁸⁷³ While Paul does number the gifts with the potential for gifts being seen in some kind of hierarchy, his primary concern in terms of assessing gifts seems to be about them being used for the common good and about gifts being assessed in the way they build up.

initiation fee of 100 sesterces and an amphora of good wine' and then 'monthly dues of 5 asses' (*CIL* 14.2112). The society looked after the funeral and burial of its members and there are instructions about when a person becomes ineligible through not paying their dues, what is due to a person to pay for their funeral, what should be disbursed at their funeral and how arrangements work if someone dies away from town. The society had four 'Masters of the dinners' who 'shall be required to provide an amphora of good wine each, and for as many members as the society has a bread costing 2 asses, sardines to the number of four, a setting, and warm water with service'. It appears that this responsibility rotated, although it is unclear whether it rotated round the whole of the membership list. However it is clear that when the group met to eat, food was provided by only some of the members, those appointed at that time 'Masters of the dinners'.

The *quinquennalis*, the secretary and the messengers were exempt from being 'Masters of dinner', but each received a great share of what was provided at the dinners, in the case of the *quinquennalis* twice as much and in the cases of the secretary and the messenger one and a half times as much. In addition the *quinquennalis* also had particular responsibilities for rituals on festive days and it was considered an honoured position.⁸⁷⁴

There are also instructions about when business may be brought up and strictures against moving around or causing a disturbance. Smith argues that these rules 'suggest that a value was placed on one's assigned position at the meeting'.⁸⁷⁵

Secondly, in the Society of the Iobacchoi, there are regular monthly meeting and particular yearly festivals (*IG* II² 1368, lines 42-44), as well as other meetings that are more business-focused to deal with offenders (84-90). There is a concern for good order, for example there are penalties for occupying someone else's couch (73-83).⁸⁷⁶ Members pay an initial entrance fee (32-41) and a wine fee (46-47). When they meet for banquets, meat is distributed with preference to people in particular positions (118-126). There are references to couches and to penalties for occupying someone else's couch.⁸⁷⁷ For those in particular positions of responsibility there is a greater financial commitment, for example the treasurer is responsible for buying lamp oil (151-155), but there are also particular benefits such as the distribution mentioned or the waiving of fees (157-9).

⁸⁷⁴ Smith, *Symposium*, 99-100.

⁸⁷⁵ Smith, *Symposium*, 101.

⁸⁷⁶ Smith, *Symposium*, 120.

⁸⁷⁷ Smith, *Symposium*, 123.

So as we look at the initial material we considered as background material and these two specific examples of meals in the Graeco-Roman world, we see a pattern of eating together, in which where one sat was important, those who were considered more important received more and better quality food and better places to sit. There is also evidence of particular people being given the responsibility of providing the food.

4.8. Comparison

We now turn to compare Paul's teaching of what the Lord's Supper should look like with what we see of the pattern of shared meals in the Graeco-Roman world.

There is no specific meal type that provides a good comparator. For example, Paul stresses the factual basis of the Lord's Supper, he locates its origin in recent real time history rather than the mythical backgrounds of the mystery religions.⁸⁷⁸ When meals were held to honour a person, they occurred on the birth date of the individual; while the Lord's Supper commemorates the death of Jesus,⁸⁷⁹ and occurs more frequently than once a year. While there are similarities between memorial meals and the Lord's Supper, for example the links to death and remembering, Bornkamm notes that in Hellenistic memorial meals the main focus is not worship.⁸⁸⁰ In the Lord's Supper, there is a focus on worship, particularly if chapters 12-14 are seen as addressing the rest of the mealtime activities.

Therefore, it seems unlikely that one type or form of meal will provide the best comparison to the Lord's Supper and we will be comparing what Paul is advocating to the general characteristics of Graeco-Roman meals rather than a specific meal or type of meal, drawing on the evidence from §4.2.1 as well as the evidence from Lanuvium and the Iobacchoi.

There are three areas where we see similarities. First, order: Paul is concerned with good order as he writes.⁸⁸¹ This can be seen in his concern about the divisions (11.18) and the way that some people are going ahead with their meals (11.21). It can also be seen later in his discussions about how they should conduct things during the rest of their meeting together, particularly his instructions about how they should share in building each other up (14.26-33). This concern with good

⁸⁷⁸ Witherington, *Conflict*, 250.

⁸⁷⁹ Coutsumpos, *Paul*, 132.

⁸⁸⁰ Bornkamm, *Christian*, 140.

⁸⁸¹ Coutsumpos, *Paul*, 134.

order can also be seen in the regulations that govern the Society of Diana and Antinous (*CIL* 14.2112 line 24) and the Iobacchoi (*IG* II² 1368 line 65).⁸⁸²

Secondly, Paul is concerned with the Corinthians being a community or society. He is concerned about the divisions he sees among them (11.18) and about the way that some of them are humiliated as they meet together (11.22). In contrast he refers to them as the church of God (11.22), as brothers (11.33) and instructs them that they should discern the body (11.29). We see a concern for the formation of the society in the instructions for how one becomes a member of the society at Lanuvium: the entry fee, the ongoing fees and the instructions about when one forfeits one's benefits from the society (*CIL* 14.2112).

Thirdly, there is some similarity between Paul's discussion about all sharing together and waiting for one another so that some should not be shamed with Pliny's teaching about equality (*Ep.* 2.6) and wider discussions about equality at meals (Plutarch *Quaest. conv.* 8.615–616B, 643E–644D).

However there are also differences. First, as Meeks points out, Paul does not write in the pattern of clubs where there are leaders with lots of titles.⁸⁸³ Paul does not instruct particular officials about what they should do as they meet together, rather he instructs the congregation as a whole (11.33).⁸⁸⁴ In contrast the societies generally specify particular people with responsibilities to conduct sacrifices, or provide the food (e.g. the Masters of the dinners at Lanuvium *CIL* 14.2112).

Secondly, the evidence from the early church is that they met in homes rather than in temples. As Stambaugh notes 'Over and over the early Christians wrote that they had no temples except the community of the faithful, the ecclesia which was the assembly of members'.⁸⁸⁵ This contrasts with many of the societies that appear to have had a hall or temple (temple room) that they would have regularly met in (*IGRPI* 1151).⁸⁸⁶ Stambaugh also suggests that the early church may have met at grave precincts, because they were less conspicuous there.⁸⁸⁷

Thirdly, the evidence within 1 Corinthians and Acts points to a congregation that was more socially diverse than many of the other groups who would have met together. While there are discussions about equality in provision of food (Plato *Symp.* 3.175B where there is an instruction to serve indiscriminately) and giving

⁸⁸² Smith, *Symposium*, 206.

⁸⁸³ Meeks, *Christians*, 134.

⁸⁸⁴ Smith, *Symposium*, 213; Barrett, *First*, 24.

⁸⁸⁵ Stambaugh, 'Function,' 602.

⁸⁸⁶ <http://philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/?p=15307> accessed 16/09/2014.

⁸⁸⁷ Stambaugh, 'Function,' 604.

diners the choice about where they eat (Plutarch *Quaest. conv.* 8.625), Plato and Plutarch both appear to be writing for more socially homogeneous groups. They also make it clear that equality in that context is novel.

Fourthly Paul has a concern for a common meal, particularly that those who have nothing should be included, which we do not see in the general Graeco-Roman meal patterns.

4.9. Conclusion

Meals in first century Corinth were important culturally, as meals are today. This chapter has looked at 1 Cor 11.17–34 as an example of sharing food within a group. Paul criticises the Corinthian church for how they share the Lord's Supper and much of what he criticizes shows similarities to some wider aspects of Graeco-Roman meals. Having criticized their practice, Paul provides catechesis, reminding them of the tradition they have already received. He then provides a way forward, which involves discerning the body, waiting / welcoming, and self-examination. Paul grounds his instruction in the Lord's Supper being a covenantal meal, which brings believers as one body, united, into the reality of Jesus' death, which they are to then proclaim by their actions (including those to one another during the meal) and their words.

Paul's presentation of what he hopes the Corinthians will do shows some similarities with meals of *collegia* / VAs: the concern for good order and concern for society membership (though with significant differences of what that means). His concern for equality also has some similarities to discussions about equality in meals in Plutarch and Pliny.

However there are also differences. First, there is evidence of greater social diversity in those eating together at Corinth than would be usual in most Graeco-Roman shared meal settings.

Secondly, Paul criticises the situation where some have more or better food than others and thus advocates a situation where all are provided for equally. This sense of equality and community may also be seen in the way that Paul makes no reference to leaders having a role within the Lord's Supper and his addressing the exhortation to the whole group.

Thirdly, the Corinthians are eating together more frequently than societies or clubs would. This may partly explain why the Lord's Supper took place in homes rather than temples or halls.

Fourthly, the practice Paul advocates focuses on relationships and unity between the Corinthians which is a result of their relationship with Christ. Their relationships with one another, and therefore their actions towards one another as they meet together and share the Lord's Supper (and also in general), should reflect the relationship they have been brought into with God-in-Christ.

5. Second Corinthians – Sharing at a Distance

5.1. Introduction

Earlier in this thesis⁸⁸⁸ we considered an example of sharing over a distance in the Antiochene collection for the believers in Judaea. We now turn to another example of sharing over a distance: the collection described in 2 Cor 8 and 9, where Paul encourages the Corinthians to reawaken their commitment to contributing to the collection for those in need in Jerusalem.

This chapter will focus on the collection from the evidence in 2 Cor 8 and 9, looking at the practice that Paul advocates and the theology that underpins his exhortation, and how these compare to other examples of sharing and giving. We first place 2 Corinthians in the context of Paul's relationship with the Corinthians, before briefly considering how chapter 8 and 9 relate to each other and the rest of the extant letter. We then consider the text of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 including the arguments Paul provides for their involvement in the collection, the practical arrangements he puts in place for the collection, and the role of generosity in the Christian life. We look at other texts that have been seen as referring to the collection: 1 Corinthians (16.1–4), Acts (11.27–30; 21.17–26), Galatians (2.10) and Romans (15.25–32). We consider whether they are specific to the collection and the ways in which they may illuminate our understanding of Paul's instructions in 2 Cor 8 and 9. The passages that refer to the collection raise questions about Paul's aim in the collection and we consider who Paul intended the collection to be for, why it was specifically for Jerusalem and whether Paul hoped that it would have an eschatological aspect.

Having considered the relevant scriptural passages we summarise the example of sharing that is presented in Paul's exhortation in 2 Cor 8 and 9. We have already considered an 'at a distance' sharing example in Acts 11.29–30 and we will briefly compare the example of the collection with the example in Acts 11, and with the comparators we considered in §3.3.3: the practice of *curator annonae* and the account of Helena and Izates. We then compare the example with other contemporary forms of sharing: the Temple Tax (from the Jewish Diaspora to Jerusalem); and patronage, benefaction and benefit exchange (while not necessarily

⁸⁸⁸ See §3.3.

an ‘over a distance’ example, there are linguistic connections). We then summarise our findings of the theology and practice that Paul advocates in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 and the similarities to and differences from the surrounding cultural practices.

5.2. The Corinthian Context

5.2.1. *Paul’s Relationship with the Corinthians*

Between 1 and 2 Corinthians there appears to have been a deterioration in the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians.⁸⁸⁹ First Corinthians refers to a previous letter (1 Cor 5.9) and indicates a previous visit (presumably that of Acts 18.1–21). After he wrote 1 Corinthians Paul made a brief visit to the Corinthians and then wrote a sorrowful letter (2.1; 7.8–9; 12.14; 13.1–3).⁸⁹⁰ Traditionally commentators often identified this letter as 1 Corinthians,⁸⁹¹ but it does not have the tone or content that would fit with Paul’s descriptions in 2.2–4 and 7.8–9. Others have identified it with 2 Cor 10–13, but this section does not mention the issues around the offender (2.5–11) and so is unlikely to be the sorrowful letter, which is probably lost.⁸⁹²

In between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians issues seem to have arisen between Paul and the Corinthians around the acceptance of money⁸⁹³ (12.11–18) and the presence of those whom Paul designates as superapostles (11.5). Matera also suggests that further divisions and immorality may have arisen within the Corinthian community.⁸⁹⁴ It thus seems possible that interest in the collection may have waned during this time⁸⁹⁵ and that the Corinthians stopped their weekly setting aside for the collection (1 Cor 16.2).⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁸⁹ It is generally agreed that 2 Corinthians (whether as an integrity or in parts) follows 1 Corinthians. Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, 9–15; C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: Blacks, 1973, 5–10; Victor Paul Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1984, 27–29, 41–48; Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005, 58–59, 64–67.

⁸⁹⁰ Unless otherwise specified biblical references in this chapter will be to 2 Corinthians.

⁸⁹¹ Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians. A Commentary*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 19. Chrysostom *Hom. 2 Cor. 15.2–3* NPNF12; John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964, 98–99.

⁸⁹² Matera, *Corinthians*, 19.

⁸⁹³ Matera, *Corinthians*, 250.

⁸⁹⁴ Matera, *Corinthians*, 15.

⁸⁹⁵ Bruce, *Corinthians*, 220. Calvin, *Second*, 111–12.

⁸⁹⁶ P. E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962, 304; Harris, *Second*, 583–84; Furnish suggests the collection may not have been taken up (Furnish, *Corinthians*, 419).

Paul has also sent Titus to Corinth during this period, and Titus' report encouraged Paul (7.5-16). Therefore as Paul writes 2 Corinthians he has some positive news, but also an awareness of ongoing and increased issues which he needs to address including his change of travel plans (1.12-2.4); why he faces hardship (4.1-5.10); why he has refused their money (12.11-18); and what apostolic ministry involves (5.11-21).⁸⁹⁷

5.2.2. *Form(ation) of 2 Corinthians*

There are significant differences of opinion about the formation of 2 Corinthians and whether it was written as one letter or whether it is made of multiple letters or letter fragments. Betz provides a history of the various theories.⁸⁹⁸ These include proposals that 2 Corinthians is two letters (1-9 and 10-13)⁸⁹⁹ or three letters (1-8, 9, 10-13).⁹⁰⁰ Theories of partition generally argue that there are differences in tone, for example in chapters 10-13,⁹⁰¹ and topic. For example Georgi argues that 2.14-7.4 or at least 6.14-7.1 is likely to be a later insertion.⁹⁰²

Chapters 8 and 9 raise further questions. They are sometimes seen as separate from one another, whether as two different letters or as parts of two different letters,⁹⁰³ for a number of reasons: *περὶ μὲν* (9.1) is seen as introducing a new topic; the reference in 9.2 does not necessarily fit with using the Macedonians as an example in 8.1-5; Paul gives different reasons for sending the brothers in 8.20 and 9.3-5; the reference in 9.2 to the recipients as Achaiaans rather than Corinthians; and the fact that 8.1-5 could imply that the collection in Macedonia is finished.⁹⁰⁴ In addition, the repetition about the brothers in 8 and 9 and the reference to Achaia (9.2) might indicate that the chapters were to two different groups,⁹⁰⁵ with Betz arguing that Paul had a different relationship with the Corinthians to the Achaiaans.⁹⁰⁶ Georgi argues that 9.1 only makes sense if chapter 9 is not linked to

⁸⁹⁷ Matera, *Corinthians*, 7.

⁸⁹⁸ Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985, 3-34.

⁸⁹⁹ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 41-47; Hanson sees 9.11-14 as implying an ending, R. P. C. Hanson, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: SCM, 1954, 74. David Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, 49-50.

⁹⁰⁰ Margaret E. Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 2 vols, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000, 2:503.

⁹⁰¹ Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999, 8.

⁹⁰² Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor. The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992, 76.

⁹⁰³ Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection. A Study in Paul's Strategy*, London: SCM, 1966, 17.

⁹⁰⁴ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 429-31.

⁹⁰⁵ Lambrecht, *Second*, 8.

⁹⁰⁶ Betz, *Corinthians*, 49.

chapter 8 and that we would expect Titus to be mentioned in the introduction in chapter 1 if 2 Corinthians were a unity.⁹⁰⁷

Betz and Stirewalt see chapters 8 and 9 as copies of letters giving authority. Betz highlights the presence of σπουδή and its cognates (8.7, 8, 16, 17, 22) as indicating administrative letters⁹⁰⁸ and argues that they are similar in form to letters of appointment,⁹⁰⁹ while Stirewalt argues that they are letters of authority.⁹¹⁰

However, despite the various arguments for partition, it is by no means clear that the evidence precludes the extant letter being written as one letter. As Lambrecht and Plummer point out there is no textual evidence showing partition⁹¹¹ or ‘that 2 Corinthians ever existed without viii. or without ix.’⁹¹² Indeed Tasker points out that we cannot find evidence of partition in early Christian writers.⁹¹³

Therefore a number of scholars argue for the unity of 2 Corinthians. Hughes argues for the unity of the letter⁹¹⁴ on the basis that it is around the one theme of ‘strength in weakness’.⁹¹⁵ Keener concludes that ‘it is easier ... to account for the letter’s current unity if it were written as such’.⁹¹⁶ While there are changes in topic and tone, these can be accounted for: Paul may have received new information during the time he was writing the letter and it is not unusual to have interruptions⁹¹⁷ or subject changes⁹¹⁸ within Paul’s letters. In addition there are links between different sections of the letter that are often seen as separate. For example, chapter 8 links to chapter 7. In 7.13–15 Paul builds confidence in Titus and his concern for them, before introducing his task in chapter 8.⁹¹⁹ Similarly Paul refers to the earnestness of the Corinthians in 7.11–12 before praising the Macedonians in 8.1–5.⁹²⁰ Harris point out the existence of conceptual and verbal links between chapters 7 and 8⁹²¹ and therefore argues that 7.4–16 is the launch for the appeal.⁹²²

⁹⁰⁷ Georgi, *Remembering*, 77.

⁹⁰⁸ Betz, *Corinthians*, 58.

⁹⁰⁹ Betz, *Corinthians*, 133.

⁹¹⁰ M. Luther Stirewalt, *Paul, the Letter Writer*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, 78.

⁹¹¹ Lambrecht, *Second*, 9.

⁹¹² Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1915, 252.

⁹¹³ R. V. G. Tasker, *2 Corinthians*, London: Tyndale, 1958, 24.

⁹¹⁴ Hughes, *Second*, xxiv–xxvi.

⁹¹⁵ Hughes, *Second*, xxx.

⁹¹⁶ Craig S. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, Cambridge: CUP, 2005, 201.

⁹¹⁷ 1 Cor 9.1–27. Matera, *Corinthians*, 31.

⁹¹⁸ Ernest Best, *Second Corinthians*, Louisville: John Knox, 1987, 75.

⁹¹⁹ Barnett, *Second*, 387.

⁹²⁰ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 408.

⁹²¹ Harris, *Second*, 558. E.g. σπουδ- root (7.11–12; 8.7, 16–17).

While there are arguments for the partition of chapters 8 and 9, there is also evidence of unity. Indeed O'Mahony shows that rhetorical analysis can equally point to the unity of chapters 8 and 9.⁹²³ Harris identifies an *inclusio* involving a number of words and phrases (ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ, δοκιμή, περισσεύω, ἀπλότης, διακονία) between 8.1-5 and 9.12-15.⁹²⁴ While 9.1 has often been used as an argument for the separation of the chapters, Bruce argues that the presence of the γάρ indicates that the subject has already been referred to⁹²⁵ and Harris notes that there is 'no evidence in extant Greek literature that the phrase περὶ μὲν γάρ ever has an introductory function'.⁹²⁶ Additionally 9.3 needs chapter 8 to understand who the brothers are.⁹²⁷ Furnish notes that 9.1-5 can be seen as an extension of 8.16-24⁹²⁸ and Lambert argues that Paul uses Achaia in 9.2 to balance his use of Macedonia.⁹²⁹

Therefore because of the lack of textual evidence of partition and the presence of links in language, structure and theme, we will work on the basis of the unity of 2 Corinthians.

5.3. Second Corinthians 8 and 9: Paul's Exhortation about the Collection

By the time Paul writes 1 Corinthians, the Corinthians are already aware of the collection. It is possible that Paul might have referred to it in his letter prior to 1 Corinthians (referred to in 1 Cor 5.9)⁹³⁰ or that they may have heard about it from the Galatian churches.⁹³¹ In 1 Cor 16.3 Paul has already indicated that the collection will be sent to Jerusalem and therefore does not need to specify this again in 2 Corinthians.⁹³²

⁹²² Harris, *Second*, 557.

⁹²³ Kieran J. O'Mahony, *Pauline Persuasion. A Sounding in 2 Corinthians 8-9*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, 79 (words used, *inclusio*); 96-102, 140 (rhetorical structure).

⁹²⁴ Harris, *Second*, 647; also Jerry W. McCant, *2 Corinthians*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, 77.

⁹²⁵ Bruce, *Corinthians*, 225.

⁹²⁶ Harris, *Second*, 617. Thrall acknowledges this, but suggests the γάρ may be redactional (Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:564).

⁹²⁷ Harris, *Second*, 617-18.

⁹²⁸ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 432.

⁹²⁹ Lambrecht, *Second*, 150.

⁹³⁰ Harris, *Second*, 555.

⁹³¹ Harris, *Second*, 556.

⁹³² Best, *Second*, 75.

5.3.1. *The Example of the Macedonians*

Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians is dominated by grace⁹³³ and starts somewhat indirectly with the example of the Macedonians' generosity in giving. Matera points out that Paul may well use this indirect approach because of the continuing fragility of his relationship with the Corinthians and his uncertainty about how they may respond.⁹³⁴

While Paul lauds the example of the Macedonians, he also emphasises that their generosity is based in the grace that God has given them (8.1)⁹³⁵ and the way that grace is rooted in Jesus' actions.⁹³⁶ His concern is to communicate the grace they have received to the Corinthians (8.1). The giving of the Macedonians is voluntary.⁹³⁷ It is the Macedonians who ask Paul (8.3-4) for the privilege of participating.⁹³⁸

The Macedonians' giving is not just voluntary, it is also generous. Ἀπλότης is difficult to translate. In the NT it occurs only here, 2 Cor 9.11, 13 and Rom 12.8; and there is a possible breadth of meanings.⁹³⁹ BDAG notes 'simplicity, sincerity, uprightness, frankness' 'esp. of personal integrity expressed in word and action.'⁹⁴⁰ While BDAG notes the suggestion of '**generosity, liberality**' for NT occurrences, BDAG thinks the first meaning is sufficient.⁹⁴¹ Thrall notes a possible instance in Josephus (*Ant.* 8.332) where ἀπλότης could be used with generosity as its meaning,⁹⁴² although it could also be interpreted there as 'sincerity'. Thrall notes that 'To give unconditionally is to give generously with sincere, single-minded concern for the recipients'⁹⁴³ and this may be the idea behind Paul's use of ἀπλότης as he speaks of the Macedonians' generosity. In a similar vein, Griffith suggests it indicates 'the integrity of the heart rather than the quantity of the gift.'⁹⁴⁴ A dual

⁹³³ Nigel Watson, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: Epworth, 1993, 58. J. M. G. Barclay, 'Because He was Rich he became Poor,' (unpublished paper), 1.

⁹³⁴ Matera, *Corinthians*, 185.

⁹³⁵ McCant, *Corinthians*, 79.

⁹³⁶ Barclay, 'Because,' 1-2, 17.

⁹³⁷ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 400.

⁹³⁸ Barnett, *Second*, 390; Tasker, *Corinthians*, 112.

⁹³⁹ Betz provides the following breadth of meaning 'the term is used to describe the Macedonians as people of "simplicity, sincerity, uprightness, frankness," as well as "generosity and liberality."' (Betz, *Corinthians*, 44).

⁹⁴⁰ BDAG, 104.

⁹⁴¹ BDAG, 104.

⁹⁴² Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:524.

⁹⁴³ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:524.

⁹⁴⁴ Gary W. Griffith, 'Abounding in Generosity. A Study of Charis in 2 Corinthians 8-9,' PhD thesis, Durham University, 2005, 226. Griffith also suggests that it may refer to human grace.

meaning seems probable as it is unclear in 8.2 what a wealth of sincerity or integrity would involve. The Macedonians' generosity to the collection is not the only example of their generosity. Paul's letter to the Philippians records that they had been generous to him in the past also (Phil 1.5; 4.15,16).⁹⁴⁵

The Macedonians' giving was also characterised by being first to the Lord (8.5). There is some discussion whether this is a question of priority in importance⁹⁴⁶ or in importance and time.⁹⁴⁷ However in both cases the priority of giving themselves to the Lord is key. As Chrysostom notes 'Everything else flowed from that' (*Hom. 2 Cor.* 16.3). It is also important to note that they gave 'themselves' first to the Lord: 'The ἐαυτούς is in an emphatic position, and this suggests that the contrast implicit in the πρῶτον has ἐαυτούς as one of its terms',⁹⁴⁸ therefore their generosity was not simply a question of giving just money.⁹⁴⁹ Indeed their giving of themselves may be seen as giving themselves in service to the Lord, through the Lord to Paul,⁹⁵⁰ and through the Lord to the collection.⁹⁵¹

The Macedonian example of giving is one that involves generosity in the midst of poverty and challenge. Barnett notes that it is likely that Achaia was probably richer than Macedonia.⁹⁵² Livy 45.30c reports the separation of the region and mining restrictions and this could have led to economic difficulties.⁹⁵³ This is in around 167 BCE and the situation may have changed. Even if the legacy of these actions is no longer current, persecution is likely to have impoverished the Macedonian Christians.⁹⁵⁴ Acts (16.11–17.15),⁹⁵⁵ 1 Thessalonians (1.6, 2.14; 3.3–5) and Philippians (1.29–30)⁹⁵⁶ all report the persecution of believers in the Macedonian region. Their poverty is described as severe 'down to depth'⁹⁵⁷ (κατὰ βάθους – 8.2) and it is possible that 'the Macedonians who knew firsthand the pain of poverty through persecution felt a deep fraternal affinity with the persecuted

⁹⁴⁵ Harris, *Second*, 563.

⁹⁴⁶ Betz, *Corinthians*, 48; Plummer, *Second*, 236.

⁹⁴⁷ Harris, *Second*, 568.

⁹⁴⁸ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 526.

⁹⁴⁹ Barnett, *Second*, 400.

⁹⁵⁰ Betz, *Corinthians*, 48; Plummer, *Second*, 236; Tasker, *Corinthians*, 112.

⁹⁵¹ Harris, *Second*, 568; Barnett, *Second*, 399.

⁹⁵² Barnett, *Second*, 393.

⁹⁵³ Barrett, *Second*, 219; Plummer, *Second*, 233.

⁹⁵⁴ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:523.

⁹⁵⁵ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:522.

⁹⁵⁶ Best, *Second*, 77.

⁹⁵⁷ Barrett, *Second*, 219.

Jewish believers in Judea.⁹⁵⁸ It is the Macedonians' poverty that overflows into generosity (8.3).⁹⁵⁹ It is not limited by their own needs as they give beyond their ability.⁹⁶⁰

5.3.2. *Paul's Instructions to the Corinthians*

Having communicated the example of the Macedonians Paul turns to instructing the Corinthians about participating in the collection.⁹⁶¹ Harris notes that Paul may not be aiming to embarrass the Corinthians, but that his words could have had that impact: Paul implores 'them to finish their collection (vv. 7, 11); the Macedonians had implored him to let them begin theirs (v. 4)!'⁹⁶² Paul's instructions are focused around the example of Jesus and χάρις. Paul crafts his words carefully to encourage the Corinthians to participate, but also to prompt their contribution to be freely given.

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gifts they abound in (8.7) and therefore encourages them to καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ χάριτι περισσεύητε (8.7). There are textual variations in 8.7. Furnish argues for τῇ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν ἀγάπῃ.⁹⁶³ This is the more difficult reading, as it would make the Corinthians responsible for Paul's love to them. It also has support from some of the earliest witnesses.⁹⁶⁴ Harris proposes that Paul is referring to the Corinthians' love engendered by Paul's love.⁹⁶⁵ Whichever of the variants is Paul's original intention, the movement of the love reminds the Corinthians of Christian models of giving love in the lead up to the exhortation that they might participate in a model of passing on grace.

Paul wants the Corinthians' giving to be voluntary.⁹⁶⁶ He is not commanding them (8.8). As Matera points out his language is very careful, to avoid insisting that they contribute.⁹⁶⁷ Just as the Macedonians voluntarily contributed, Paul wants the

⁹⁵⁸ Barrett, *Second*, 393. Briones argues that one of the characteristics of the Philippian κοινωνία with Paul and God is their sharing in suffering with Paul which is why Paul allows them to financially support him (David E. Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy. A Social-Theological Approach*, London/ New York: Bloomsbury/ T&T Clark, 2013, 116–17, 129)

⁹⁵⁹ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 400.

⁹⁶⁰ Hughes, *Second*, 290.

⁹⁶¹ Downs notes that rivalry was often used in benefaction contexts but that it is different here as there is a focus on love and zeal, and giving does not lead to receiving honour. (Downs, *Offering*, 131–32).

⁹⁶² Harris, *Second*, 569.

⁹⁶³ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 403.

⁹⁶⁴ For example \mathfrak{P}^{46} , B.

⁹⁶⁵ Harris, *Second*, 574.

⁹⁶⁶ Plummer, *Second*, 240.

⁹⁶⁷ Matera, *Corinthians*, 189.

Corinthians to contribute voluntarily.⁹⁶⁸ Furnish and Héring see Paul as giving the Corinthians advice / counsel⁹⁶⁹ and Héring suggests that this is all that is needed because they are already willing (8.10–11).⁹⁷⁰

Paul reminds the Corinthians that he is not urging them to do anything that they have not already expressed a desire to do (8.10). He points out that their desire to be involved precedes that of the Macedonians (9.2).⁹⁷¹ He now urges them to complete what they desired and willed to do (8.11).⁹⁷² McCant argues that by using ἐπιτελέω, Paul ‘evokes the image of a benefactor who fulfills an obligation’.⁹⁷³ Danker points out that ἐπιτελέω is used on inscriptions describing a benefactor completing something,⁹⁷⁴ and Downs notes it could be used of the ‘performance of sacred rites’.⁹⁷⁵

Central to Paul’s exhortation for the Corinthians to contribute is the example of Jesus,⁹⁷⁶ who gives up voluntarily (8.9).⁹⁷⁷ Jesus is the ‘supreme model’⁹⁷⁸ and while Paul is careful not to command the Corinthians, the example of Jesus may be seen as commanding them,⁹⁷⁹ or at least as being such a strong example that Paul has no need to command them.⁹⁸⁰ Barclay goes further to see Jesus’ actions not just as an example, but as ‘a divine momentum in which believers are caught up, and by which they are empowered to be, in turn, richly self-sharing with others.’⁹⁸¹

Paul is clear that Jesus is an example of grace and giving, however there is some discussion about what Paul is indicating that Jesus gave up and took on in this process. Georgi and Barnett see Paul as referring to Jesus giving up his heavenly

⁹⁶⁸ Barnett, *Second*, 394.

⁹⁶⁹ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 409; Jean Héring, *The Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, London: Epworth, 1967, 60.

⁹⁷⁰ Héring, *Second*, 60.

⁹⁷¹ Barrett, *Second*, 225.

⁹⁷² Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* Waco: Word, 1986, 260.

⁹⁷³ McCant, *Corinthians*, 82.

⁹⁷⁴ F. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field*, St Louis: Clayton, 1982, 362.

⁹⁷⁵ Downs, *Offering*, 135.

⁹⁷⁶ Barrett, *Second*, 224.

⁹⁷⁷ Barnett, *Second*, 408.

⁹⁷⁸ Harris, *Second*, 578.

⁹⁷⁹ Hughes, *Second*, 302.

⁹⁸⁰ Plummer, *Second*, 240; Matera, *Corinthians*, 191; Best, *Second*, 81.

⁹⁸¹ J. M. G. Barclay, ‘Manna and the Circulation of Grace: A Study of 2 Corinthians 8:1–15,’ in J. Ross Wagner, C. Kevin Rowe and A. Katherine Grieb, eds, *The Word Leaps the Gap. Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, Grand Rapids/ Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008, 409–26, citing 421.

state.⁹⁸² Tanner argues that Jesus gains the believer's poverty / need, so that the believer may gain God's riches.⁹⁸³ However, while Tasker and Harris see Jesus as giving up riches in the incarnation, others see it more in terms of giving up communion with the Father and his willingness to give up in this way bringing spiritual benefits and salvation to the Corinthians.⁹⁸⁴ Spencer draws together a whole range of possible areas of poverty that Jesus takes on: being part of a poor family, becoming human, obedience, 'living for the poor', 'being rejected by humans' and 'by dying on behalf of human sin'.⁹⁸⁵

Barclay identifies an alternative to this range of possible meanings of riches and poverty. He points out that if Paul is referring to Jesus giving up his heavenly pre-existent state,⁹⁸⁶ there is a need for a shift from the metaphorical in language use to the literal⁹⁸⁷ when it is then applied to the Corinthians. Barclay notes that Paul talks about the Macedonians' wealth in terms of their generosity (8.2, 13) and in 8.7 exhorts the Corinthians καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ χάριτι περισσεύητε, that is they are to abound or be wealthy in the grace of generosity.⁹⁸⁸ He concludes that

in 2 Cor 8-9 there seems to be a consistent effort to give the abundance and wealth metaphors a paradoxical twist, so that both Christ and the Corinthians may be said to be "wealthy" not in their possessions but in their generosity; metaphorical "wealth", in other words, is gained precisely when literal wealth is passed on or shared.⁹⁸⁹

Paul does challenge the Corinthians' picture of what it means to be rich in his description of the Macedonians (8.2). Nevertheless, while Barclay's analysis that Paul is including within wealth the idea of generosity / giving away is persuasive, this does not necessarily preclude Paul intending a multireferent meaning in what Jesus gives up in becoming poor, and in what it means to be rich / wealthy.

'The Macedonians gave when they were desperately poor; Christ gave when he was incalculably rich. In their present economic circumstances the Corinthians fitted somewhere between these two extremes.'⁹⁹⁰ The Macedonians gave παρὰ δύναμιν (8.4). Jesus δι' ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν (8.9), yet Paul holds back from urging

⁹⁸² Georgi, *Remembering*, 83; Barnett, *Second*, 408.

⁹⁸³ Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005, 79.

⁹⁸⁴ Harris, *Second*, 578-79; Tasker, *Corinthians*, 115; Lambrecht, *Second*, 143.

⁹⁸⁵ Aída Besançon Spencer, *2 Corinthians*, Oxford: BRF, 2001, 136-7.

⁹⁸⁶ Barclay, 'Because,' 5.

⁹⁸⁷ Barclay, 'Because,' 9.

⁹⁸⁸ Barclay, 'Because,' 14.

⁹⁸⁹ Barclay, 'Because,' 17.

⁹⁹⁰ Harris, *Second*, 581.

the Corinthians to give in the same way.⁹⁹¹ Rather he specifies that they should give according to what they have but not necessarily beyond that (8.12).⁹⁹² Furnish suggests that Paul may be addressing a situation where the Corinthians have stopped the collection because they were concerned that what they would collect would be too little for them to send.⁹⁹³

Paul goes on to reassure the Corinthians that the aim is not for them to become hard up, but rather equality and that their current provision will supply the need of those in Jerusalem (8.13–14). In addition to our arguments in §3.2.2 about the particular needs of the Jerusalem congregation, Strachan also notes that the presence of pilgrims would have raised demand and prices and therefore increased the plight of the Jerusalem believers.⁹⁹⁴ While Jesus and the Macedonians gave beyond equality, Paul's encouragement for the Corinthians is that they should give to effect equality (8.13).⁹⁹⁵ The aim is not that they become poor or suffer economic hardship,⁹⁹⁶ but rather that there is equality⁹⁹⁷ and relief from want.⁹⁹⁸ Ambrosiaster comments that while Paul does not want them to cause hardship to themselves 'a person ought not to keep more than he needs for himself' (*Comm. CSEL* 81.260).

However, while Paul is clear that the aim is ἰσότης (8.13), it is important to remember that equality in the Graeco-Roman world is not identical to today's ideas of equality. The only other place that Paul uses the word is in Col 4.1 where he talks about what is fair for slaves.⁹⁹⁹ In Graeco-Roman thought equality between people of different social and economic backgrounds did not necessarily mean equal shares, but could mean shares in proportion to their relative advantage (Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 5.5.8–10). BDAG defines ἰσότης as being a '**state of matters being held in proper balance, equality**', a '**state of being fair, fairness**'.¹⁰⁰⁰ Philo notes that equality has several forms (*Heir* 144) and speaks of equality being proportional, giving the example of requiring payment from a citizen that is

⁹⁹¹ Georgi, *Remembering*, 83.

⁹⁹² Hughes, *Second*, 305; Matera, *Corinthians*, 192.

⁹⁹³ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 419.

⁹⁹⁴ R. H. Strachan, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935, 131–2.

⁹⁹⁵ Spencer, *Corinthians*, 141.

⁹⁹⁶ Harris, *Second*, 589.

⁹⁹⁷ Best, *Second*, 79.

⁹⁹⁸ Hughes, *Second*, 306.

⁹⁹⁹ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 407; Georgi, *Remembering*, 84.

¹⁰⁰⁰ BDAG, 481.

‘proportionate to the valuation of his estate’ (*Heir* 145). Georgi wonders whether Paul had a similar background to Philo in terms of Graeco-Roman thought when he came to think about the word,¹⁰⁰¹ although he acknowledges that Paul uses both Hellenistic wisdom and Apocalyptic concepts.¹⁰⁰² There is probably insufficient evidence in Paul’s two uses of the word to conclude exactly which backgrounds Paul was particularly influenced by and it is probably more helpful to consider the context in 2 Corinthians in which Paul uses the word to understand what Paul has in mind by its use.

We have already noted that Paul does not desire that the Corinthians are hard pressed, but instead contrasts that with equality. He goes on to define this equality in terms of reciprocity based on responding at times of need (8.14)¹⁰⁰³ and also gives the example of the manna in 8.15 (quoting Exod 16.18).

There is some discussion about the kind of reciprocity Paul has in mind and whether Paul foresees the Jerusalem believers being in a position to provide material help to the Corinthian believers. Barnett argues the reciprocal help could be ‘spiritual fellowship and unity’ and then if circumstances allowed material.¹⁰⁰⁴ Martin sees the help in an eschatological context suggesting that ‘Israel’s future will enrich them in due time by accelerating the close of the age.’¹⁰⁰⁵ However, as Matera points out, there is no reference to spiritual help or aid and therefore the aid envisaged is probably economic.¹⁰⁰⁶ Thrall argues that in the context of changing economic situations ‘The theoretical prospect of future aid from Jerusalem to Corinthian might well seem realistic’,¹⁰⁰⁷ noting that Paul did not know about the Jewish War at this point.¹⁰⁰⁸

While some have looked to Paul’s words in Rom 15.27 to argue that the reciprocity here is one which swaps material for spiritual blessings,¹⁰⁰⁹ in 2 Corinthians Paul does not indicate that he has spiritual blessings in mind.¹⁰¹⁰ Indeed, while Rom 15.27 envisages the Gentiles in some sense repaying the blessing they have already received, in 8.14 Paul foresees a situation where the Jerusalem

¹⁰⁰¹ Georgi, *Remembering*, 86.

¹⁰⁰² Georgi, *Remembering*, 91.

¹⁰⁰³ Lambrecht, *Second*, 138.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Barnett, *Second*, 414.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Martin, *Corinthians*, 269.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Matera, *Corinthians*, 193. Also Hughes, *Second*, 308; Plummer, *Second*, 245.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:542.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:542.

¹⁰⁰⁹ See §5.4.4.

¹⁰¹⁰ Matera, *Corinthians*, 193.

believers in the future will supply what the Corinthians need, using the same words to indicate abundance and need (περίσσευμα, ὑστέρημα) for both the Corinthians and the Jerusalem believers.

Paul's second way of defining equality is the quote he uses from Exod 16.18, bringing to mind God's provision for the Israelites in the wilderness through daily manna (8.15). Philo uses the same verse and story when he writes on equality.¹⁰¹¹ Philo indicates that the equality was characterized by each person having sufficient manna (*Heir* 191). Hughes argues that the manna was collected and then distributed,¹⁰¹² but there does not seem to be evidence of redistribution of the manna. A more helpful approach may be found in Lim and Best, who both note that hoarding manna brings no benefit.¹⁰¹³ This idea of sharing rather than hoarding would link with Paul's desire that none should go short.¹⁰¹⁴ However there is a contrast between the Israelites in the wilderness and what Paul hopes for the Corinthians:

The equality that the people of God of old experienced in the wilderness was the result of a divine miracle and was enforced and inescapable. The equality to be experienced by the new people of God, on the other hand, would be the result of human initiative and would be voluntary and so not automatic.¹⁰¹⁵

Barclay argues that, in contrast to other Jewish writers of the time (Josephus, Philo, Wisdom of Solomon), 'Paul alone connects the gathering of the manna with a human mechanism of (re)distribution.'¹⁰¹⁶ He argues that Paul blends the Exod 16 story with Jesus' model of self-giving.¹⁰¹⁷ Similarly Han notes that Paul 'identifies the Corinthians with the Israelites, but, implicitly, also with their Lord by urging them to do the very thing that was done miraculously by the God of Israel.'¹⁰¹⁸

5.3.3. *Titus and the Brothers*

Paul then introduces Titus and the two brothers, whom he is sending to help with the collection. Titus comes to the Corinthians freely (8.17)¹⁰¹⁹ and is already known

¹⁰¹¹ Betz, *Corinthians*, 69.

¹⁰¹² Hughes, *Second*, 307.

¹⁰¹³ Best, *Second*, 80; Kar Yong Lim, 'Generosity from Pauline Perspective: Insights from Paul's Letter to the Corinthians,' *ERT* 37 (2013) 20–33, citing 28.

¹⁰¹⁴ Witherington, *Conflict*, 421.

¹⁰¹⁵ Harris, *Second*, 594.

¹⁰¹⁶ Barclay, 'Manna,' 419.

¹⁰¹⁷ Barclay, 'Manna,' 421–26.

¹⁰¹⁸ Paul Han, 'Swimming in the Sea of Scripture: Paul's Use of the Old Testament in 2 Corinthians 4:7–13:13,' PhD thesis, London School of Theology / Middlesex University, 2011, 122.

¹⁰¹⁹ Spencer, *Corinthians*, 143.

to the Corinthians through previous visits and therefore trusted.¹⁰²⁰ Accompanying him are two brothers who are not named (8.18, 22). There is considerable discussion about who these two brothers are and why they are unnamed. Despite the amount of discussion on the range of possibilities of individuals and places, it is unlikely that we will be able to discern who these two brothers are; however it is probable that, given that they are appointed by churches to accompany the collection, they are from one of the church communities involved in the collection.¹⁰²¹

Between them Titus and the brothers have considerable authority: personal (Paul's commission), ecclesiastical (chosen by the churches) and Christological (δόξα Χριστοῦ 8.23).¹⁰²² In addition to indicating authority from Christ, δόξα Χριστοῦ also brings to mind benefaction links. Harrison notes the possible background of benefaction.¹⁰²³ This suggests that by using 'δόξα Χριστοῦ (2 Cor 9:23), Paul implicitly confronts the Corinthians with a choice between the "glory" of two houses and their dependents'.¹⁰²⁴ It would also seem logical that the phrase indicates that the brothers promoted the glory of Christ.¹⁰²⁵

Titus and the two brothers are equipped and commissioned and have a number of possible roles. First, is the role that Paul is clearest about – that of securing probity (8.21–22). Second Corinthians 2.17, 7.2 and 12.14–18 suggest that Paul is defending himself against some accusation, though whether it is of financial misappropriation,¹⁰²⁶ peddling God's word¹⁰²⁷ or a more general Corinthian suspicion about Paul's relationship with them and with finance¹⁰²⁸ is less clear. However Paul desires that the collection is not misused, nor seen to be misused (8.20–21; Chrysostom, *Hom. 2 Cor.* 18.1).

Secondly, Titus and the brothers may be seen as making the collection more secure from outside attack as Paul takes it to Jerusalem.¹⁰²⁹ Watson points out that

¹⁰²⁰ Larry Kreitzer, *2 Corinthians*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, 89.

¹⁰²¹ Harris, *Second*, 602–03.

¹⁰²² Harris, *Second*, 595–96; O'Mahony, *Persuasion*, 155.

¹⁰²³ James R. Harrison, 'The Brothers as the "Glory of Christ" (2 Cor 8:23),' *NovT* 52 (2010) 156–188, citing 182.

¹⁰²⁴ Harrison, 'Brothers,' 185.

¹⁰²⁵ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:555.

¹⁰²⁶ Best, *Second*, 83. Downs, *Offering*, 139.

¹⁰²⁷ Hanson, *Second*, 68.

¹⁰²⁸ Barnett, *Second*, 417.

¹⁰²⁹ Harris, *Second*, 600; Matera, *Corinthians*, 197.

these first two reasons fit the ‘conventions surrounding the movement of money in the first century’.¹⁰³⁰

Thirdly, Georgi suggests that the reference to the first brother’s service in the gospel indicates that he is a skilled teacher, who could then explain the full meaning of the letter.¹⁰³¹

Fourthly, Betz and McCant suggest that the group’s role is organisational: the Corinthians are willing (8.10–12), but not so good at organising the collection, and so Titus and the two brothers are to oversee the organisation of the collection (9.5).¹⁰³² The two brothers are appointed by the churches and Paul,¹⁰³³ but Thrall also argues they were ‘the legal and political *persona* of the churches they represented’¹⁰³⁴ and Betz argues that Titus had a similar role of representing Paul¹⁰³⁵ with the letter functioning as a letter of authority.¹⁰³⁶ However O’Mahony points out that the language Paul uses is not necessarily administrative.¹⁰³⁷ There does not seem to be sufficient evidence within the text to point to chapters 8 and 9 being of a specific administrative form and while Paul does commend the two brothers who are coming with Titus, this does not seem to be the sole purpose of these chapters, but rather part of his broader argument to encourage the Corinthian participation in the collection.

At the end of his endorsement of the role of Titus and the two brothers, Paul emphasises that his desire is that their contribution to the collection should be ὡς εὐλογίαν καὶ μὴ ὡς πλεονεξίαν (9.5). Thrall suggests that there are three different possible meaning for πλεονεξία here: grudgingly given, which fits the sentence but seems ‘to distort the natural meaning’; that if Paul compels ‘the Corinthians to give, he will seem to be exacting the money in a greedy spirit’ (which would give a different subject for εὐλογία and πλεονεξία), or the third option, which Thrall proposes, of the word referring back to Exod 16.18 and those who ‘have too

¹⁰³⁰ Deborah Elaine Watson, ‘Paul’s Collection in Light of Motivations and Mechanisms for Aid to the Poor in the First-Century World,’ PhD thesis, Durham University, 2006, 168. Contra Becker who asserts that ‘fiscal oversight is a Western democratic notion’ (Joseph Peter Becker, *Paul’s Usage of Χάρις in 2 Corinthians 8–9. An Ontology of Grace*, Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 2011, 122).

¹⁰³¹ Georgi, *Remembering*, 74.

¹⁰³² Betz, *Corinthians*, 93; McCant, *Corinthians*, 91.

¹⁰³³ Barnett, *Second*, 421.

¹⁰³⁴ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:556.

¹⁰³⁵ Betz, *Corinthians*, 71, 78–79.

¹⁰³⁶ See §5.2.2.

¹⁰³⁷ O’Mahony, *Persuasion*, 172–74.

much'.¹⁰³⁸ 'The Corinthian contribution to the collection is not to be an expression of any such "desire to have more" than their fellow Christians of the mother church.'¹⁰³⁹ While there are issues with the second option, the first meaning could be combined with the third with *πλεονεξία* indicating 'a gift that is grudgingly granted by avarice'.¹⁰⁴⁰

5.3.4. *Why Give?*

Paul then turns to give a basis for generous giving. Strachan sees this final section as Paul presenting the 'moral interest' reasons that the Corinthians should give.¹⁰⁴¹ However Paul's argument seems wider, including the idea of God as provider (9.8, 14-15) and that the Corinthians should not fear need if they give.¹⁰⁴² 'Above all he speaks of God, who is the creative source of their generosity and who is also continually giving in abundance.'¹⁰⁴³ One example of this reference to God's generosity is the way that Paul uses the same word of sowing generously as Prov 22.8 LXX (which Paul goes on to quote) does of God's blessing.¹⁰⁴⁴

One of the images that Paul uses to communicate this point is that of farming – of seeds and harvest. It is God who will provide both the seed and the generosity¹⁰⁴⁵ and therefore giving results in God's honour.¹⁰⁴⁶ Betz notes that the language here is not necessarily Christian.¹⁰⁴⁷ Yet while Paul uses words and images that would fit with Jewish thought and with Graeco-Roman thought, he bases his argument about generosity and giving, not only around the general generosity of God, but also around God's generosity seen in the gospel of Jesus (8.9) and he sees the Corinthian contribution as being part of their confession of τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ (9.13).

Paul continues to emphasise that giving should be voluntary, not forced; not a burden, but joyful (9.7).¹⁰⁴⁸ As we have already seen there is a tension between: the strength of the examples that Paul uses, particularly that of Jesus (8.9); and the way that Paul has previously told them that all things come from God (1 Cor 4.7); and

¹⁰³⁸ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:571-3.

¹⁰³⁹ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:573.

¹⁰⁴⁰ BDAG, 824.

¹⁰⁴¹ Strachan, *Second*, 137.

¹⁰⁴² Tasker, *Corinthians*, 125.

¹⁰⁴³ Lambrecht, *Second*, 151.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone. 1 Corinthians*, London: SPCK, 2003, 102.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Matera, *Corinthians*, 207-08.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Martin, *Corinthians*, 293.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Betz, *Corinthians*, 99, 100.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Lambrecht, *Second*, 177.

the fact that Paul continues to place the onus on the Corinthians to make the decision to give in their own heart (9.7).¹⁰⁴⁹ The decision to give should not be compelled (9.7), but the giving should be done generously (9.6)¹⁰⁵⁰ and cheerfully (9.7). In 9.7 Paul picks up Prov 22.8a LXX. Han notes there are verbal correspondences and matches between this section and Prov 22.8–9 with ‘the same idea of sowing and reaping imagery and cheerful giving’ being ‘followed by the promise of abundance or nourishment’.¹⁰⁵¹ Paul makes a small change to Prov 22.8a and uses ἀγαπᾷ instead of εὐλογεῖ. Betz argues he may be quoting from memory, but also that he may have consciously made the change to fit with his argument.¹⁰⁵² Han helpfully suggests this may be to focus on the ‘attitude of the giver. The giver’s interest should not be in God’s blessing as a result of the giving, but in reflecting God’s manner of giving by having a cheerful and generous attitude.’¹⁰⁵³

Paul does not just encourage the Corinthians to decide to give or give them examples of generous giving, he also asserts that God is able to provide for them to give and that giving brings its own rewards (9.8, 11). As Tasker points out:

Generous giving for those who have little to give seems very hazardous; but the risk tends to be forgotten when the greatness of God’s power is kept steadily in mind. All our resources, great or small, come ultimately from God; and God is able, Paul insists, to increase those resources. Where the generous spirit exists God will provide the means by which it can be expressed.¹⁰⁵⁴

Paul started chapter 8 by reminding the Corinthians of God’s giving nature (8.1). Indeed Barnett argues that the fact that δεδομένην is a passive perfect points to God continuing to give.¹⁰⁵⁵ Here in 9.6–15, Paul continues to remind the Corinthians that God gives and will provide for them that they may also give. As Furnish points out, because it is God who provides, consequent giving gives glory to God.¹⁰⁵⁶

Paul uses the classically Stoic word αὐτάρκεια (9.8), which means “self-sufficiency” in the sense of “independence”, then gener. “sufficiency” and could internally refer to ‘*contentment*’.¹⁰⁵⁷ As Keener points out, it is not just used by

¹⁰⁴⁹ McCant, *Corinthians*, 93.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Hughes, *Second*, 328–330.

¹⁰⁵¹ Han, ‘Swimming,’ 128.

¹⁰⁵² Betz, *Corinthians*, 107–8.

¹⁰⁵³ Han, ‘Swimming,’ 129.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Tasker, *Corinthians*, 126.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Barnett, *Second*, 391.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 446.

¹⁰⁵⁷ BDAG, 152.

Stoics (Prov 30.8 LXX, Ps Sol 5:16).¹⁰⁵⁸ Paul also uses the word in a sense that is different from the usual Stoic sense.¹⁰⁵⁹ ‘The Stoic’s sufficiency is from himself, whereas Paul’s sufficiency is the gift of God, the result of his grace (χάρις),’¹⁰⁶⁰ which Georgi sees as ‘the simplicity of an open, trusting, and faithful heart.’¹⁰⁶¹ McCant observes that in Phil 4.11 Paul transforms the word’s meaning¹⁰⁶² using it with the sense of contentment.¹⁰⁶³ Here Paul seems to view ‘*autarkeia* as a sufficiency of material wealth, supplied by God, which believers can disperse to those in need’.¹⁰⁶⁴ Thus the idea of freedom is retained, but it is a freedom to give and to bless.¹⁰⁶⁵ Also, as Plummer points out, the idea of not being bound to possessions / contentment creates the possibility to give.’¹⁰⁶⁶

Whether God’s blessing includes not just the means, but also the desire, as Harris asserts is not clear.¹⁰⁶⁷ However it is possible and the πρῶτον τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ (8.5) may cohere with this idea.¹⁰⁶⁸ Becker sees δύναμις in 8.3 ‘as an allusion to the Χάρις of God at work in the Macedonians’.¹⁰⁶⁹ Other factors that may add weight to this possible reading include the way that Paul references both his own action and God’s action in 1 Cor 15.10,¹⁰⁷⁰ and the way Paul indicates that knowing Jesus / encountering the divine leads to transformation.¹⁰⁷¹ Elsewhere Paul does indicate that God provides both motive and means (Phil 2.13) and thus we concur with Thrall who suggests it is likely here,¹⁰⁷² as well as noting with Griffith that Paul still sees a role for believers being willing and the need for them to have the right attitude to God.¹⁰⁷³

Paul then quotes from Ps 111.9 LXX. While Barrett suggests other scriptural allusions,¹⁰⁷⁴ Han points out that 9.9 is a verbatim quote of LXX Ps111.9 but ‘τοῦ

¹⁰⁵⁸ Keener, *Corinthians*, 213.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Barrett, *Second*, 237.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Barrett, *Second*, 237; also Martin, *Corinthians*, 290; Harris, *Second*, 638.

¹⁰⁶¹ Georgi, *Remembering*, 160.

¹⁰⁶² McCant, *Corinthians*, 95.

¹⁰⁶³ Also 1 Tim 6.6.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Matera, *Corinthians*, 206.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Watson, *Second*, 99; Witherington, *Conflict*, 427.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Plummer, *Second*, 260.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Harris, *Second*, 638.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Becker, *Χάρις*, 145.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Becker, *Χάρις*, 81.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Griffith, ‘Abounding,’ 169.

¹⁰⁷¹ Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010, 180, 182, 242.

¹⁰⁷² Thrall, *Corinthians*, 578.

¹⁰⁷³ Griffith, ‘Abounding,’ 205, 214, 252.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Barrett, *Second*, 238.

αἰῶνος is missing'.¹⁰⁷⁵ In the Psalm, the subject of the verse is the righteous person, however in 2 Cor 9 the subject is less clear as in verses 8 and 10 the subject is God. The subject of 9.9 could be God,¹⁰⁷⁶ the person,¹⁰⁷⁷ or a combination.¹⁰⁷⁸ Furnish argues for a combination of the person's acts and God.¹⁰⁷⁹ However the person's acts do not seem a straightforward subject for the first half of the verse grammatically. While verse 8 does have God as the subject, it speaks about God's provision so that the Corinthians may abound in every good work, which could point to God's righteousness being seen in the person's righteousness. This would fit with Han's argument that the close link between the person and God in Ps 111 and Paul's quoting of the Psalm suggest that 'God is providing for the poor through the Corinthians. Even when the Corinthians help the poor, it is in fact God who is helping them through his people.'¹⁰⁸⁰

The focus in all three verses seems to be on God providing, so that the Corinthians can in turn give. The fact that the subject of verse 9 could be ambiguous in some ways only highlights Paul's point that God gives so that the Corinthians may also give.¹⁰⁸¹

Having reassured the Corinthians that they can confidently give because God will provide all that they need in order to give (and indeed go on giving) (9.8, 10–11),¹⁰⁸² Paul turns to focus on what the result of the collection will be. Paul has already pointed out that the result should be the alleviation of need (8.14) and he now repeats that (9.12) and adds that the Corinthians' participation in the collection will involve God being thanked and glorified and the Corinthians being enriched and prayed for.

However, as in Philippians (1.3; 4.10–20),¹⁰⁸³ thanks will not be given to the Corinthians, but rather to God (9.11–12).¹⁰⁸⁴ Paul affirms God 'as the sole object of

¹⁰⁷⁵ Han, 'Swimming,' 32.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, Cambridge: CUP, 1991, Witherington, *Conflict*, 427.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Matera, *Corinthians*, 206; Lambrecht, *Second*, 147; Hughes, *Second*, 332; Harris, *Second*, 640.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Georgi, *Remembering*, 99.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 448–49.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Han, 'Swimming,' 136.

¹⁰⁸¹ Barnett, *Second*, 436, 439; Betz sees God providing to the Corinthians 'both the material means and the inner disposition to become cheerful givers' (Betz, *Corinthians*, 110).

¹⁰⁸² Han sees a phrasal link with LXX Is 55.10 and argues that Paul uses the link to emphasis the certainties of God's provision (Han, 'Swimming,' 137, 140).

¹⁰⁸³ G. W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi. Conventions of Gift Exchange and Christian Giving*, Cambridge: CUP, 1997, 9.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Georgi, *Remembering*, 102.

thanksgiving¹⁰⁸⁵ because God is ultimately the benefactor and provider in the relationship.¹⁰⁸⁶ It is not altogether clear who is doing the thanking: in verse 11 it happens δι' ἡμῶν and then in verse 12 the collection results in many thanksgivings as well as the supply of the needs, so it may be that those whose needs are supplied are the ones who abound in thanksgiving to God. Matera also questions who it is that is glorifying God in verse 13, arguing that it is the Corinthians who glorify God, as otherwise the change of subject would be rather abrupt.¹⁰⁸⁷ Griffith notes that the genitive absolute in verse 13 suggests a change of subject from the previous verse which would suggest that the subject of verse 13 is the Corinthians and that of verse 12 is the Jerusalemites.¹⁰⁸⁸ The phrase διὰ τῆς δοκιμῆς τῆς διακονίας ταύτης which is dependent on δοξάζοντες fits more naturally with the Corinthians as the subject. This also fits with the possibility that Paul sees the collection itself as worship and Witherington argues that for Paul, 'Generous giving to the saints is not merely a civic obligation but also an act of worship and thanksgiving to God.'¹⁰⁸⁹

In addition to God being thanked and glorified (probably by the recipients as well as by the Corinthians by their very act of giving), Paul also asserts that the Corinthians will be enriched and prayed for by those who receive the collection and therefore who have affection for them (9.14).¹⁰⁹⁰

In 2 Cor 8 and 9 Paul does not name Jerusalem as the destination of the collection.¹⁰⁹¹ Harris sees the reference in 9.12 to οἱ ἅγιοι as an abbreviation of the οἱ πτωχοὶ τῶν ἁγίων τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ (Rom 15.26)¹⁰⁹² that functioned almost as a title for those believers in Jerusalem. However, as we shall see later, it is not clear that οἱ ἅγιοι was used in this way (§5.5.1). The Corinthians probably would have seen the recipients as the Jerusalem believers because Paul had already specified in 1 Cor 16.1 that the collection was going to be taken to Jerusalem. We will examine Paul's aims for the collection in more detail and how he perceives it influencing the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers after we have

¹⁰⁸⁵ Downs, *Offering*, 143.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Harris, *Second*, 646.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Matera, *Corinthians*, 210.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Griffith, 'Abounding,' 235.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Witherington, *Conflict*, 428. 'In the normal and healthy Christian life, everything proceeds from God's generosity, and everything returns to God in thanksgiving.' (Wright, *Paul*, 103) 'The final goal of all giving is God's honour' (Martin, *Corinthians*, 293).

¹⁰⁹⁰ Barrett, *Second*, 447; Thrall, *Corinthians*, 541.

¹⁰⁹¹ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 402.

¹⁰⁹² Harris, *Second*, 567.

considered other NT texts that deal with the collection. For now we note that Georgi argues that the submission in 9.13 is to God and therefore shows the Jerusalemites the equality of the Corinthians' faith¹⁰⁹³ and thus encourages unity between Jewish and Gentile believers.¹⁰⁹⁴

In 8.14 Paul envisages a return to supply the Corinthians' need and in 9.11 he talks about them being enriched in every way. This raises the question of what the Corinthians would receive and how they would be enriched. Augustine saw the material giving resulting in the spiritual blessing of eternal life (*Ep.* 268) and Chrysostom saw the benefit in the actual giving (*Hom.* 10.4). Theodoret of Cyrrhus saw the benefit the Corinthians received as being the prayers of the poor (*Comm. 2 Cor.* 336). However, in 8.14, Paul's phraseology does not preclude material benefits and thus Best argues that the enrichment is not necessarily just spiritual.¹⁰⁹⁵ Indeed particularly in 9.8 and 10 where Paul is emphasizing God's provision for generosity and giving, he seems to suggest that God will continue to supply in order that they may continue to give / sow.

However, having talked about the enrichment and prayers that would be the result of the collection, Paul comes back to God's grace and gift and finishes with a concluding exclamation of praise to God (9.15). While 9.15 follows 9.14 which recounts God's grace resulting in the Corinthians' contribution to the collection, the whole passage points to God's generosity, with various scholars seeing the gift as Jesus.¹⁰⁹⁶ Chrysostom (*Hom. 2 Cor.* 20.2)¹⁰⁹⁷ argues that it is the gift of Jesus or the gift that Jesus bestows, which Matera takes forward arguing that the gift in mind is salvation.¹⁰⁹⁸ It is not necessary to distinguish between Jesus and salvation as the gift, as both fit within the context of Paul having focused on God's grace and on Jesus' generosity in salvation. However as Matera points out this exclamation of praise 'emphasizes the relationship of the collection to God's overall work of redemption'.¹⁰⁹⁹

¹⁰⁹³ Georgi, *Remembering*, 105, 117.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Georgi, *Remembering*, 109.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Best, *Second*, 85.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Barnett, *Second*, 448; Hughes, *Second*, 342; Strachan, *Second*, 145.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Gerald Bray ed. *1-2 Corinthians*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1999, 282.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Matera, *Corinthians*, 210.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Matera, *Corinthians*, 210.

5.3.5. *Grace, Service, Fellowship and Blessing: Paul's Use of Theologically Significant Words*

This relationship of the collection (and more generally of generosity) to God's grace, Jesus and salvation are also seen in the way that Paul uses theologically significant words throughout chapters 8 and 9. We turn therefore to examine some of the theological words that Paul uses within his argument and what we may discover from them.

Central to Paul's argument is χάρις and words consistent with it.¹¹⁰⁰ Paul uses the word with a range of meanings throughout the letter¹¹⁰¹ and indeed starts and ends 2 Corinthians with χάρις.¹¹⁰² He uses it ten times in chapters 8 and 9 and Harris identifies six meanings in the two chapters: God's grace (8.1; 9.8, 14); privilege or favour (8.4); act of grace (8.6); grace of giving (8.7); offering (8.19); and thanks (8.16; 9.15).¹¹⁰³ Hughes identifies four: God's grace (8.1), favour from the apostle (8.4), gift (8.6) and thanksgiving (8.16).¹¹⁰⁴ Griffith argues that Paul uses χάρις to emphasize the voluntary nature rather than the obligation of the gift.¹¹⁰⁵

As O'Mahony notes it may be particularly apt that Paul speaks to the Corinthians 'using the language of χάρις to a community where χάρισματa were so highly esteemed and played so much a part in the community's identity.'¹¹⁰⁶ Indeed Barclay argues that 'the term χάρις is not idly chosen, but freighted with theological, and specifically Christological connotations'.¹¹⁰⁷ It is τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (8.9) which is seen in Christ's self-giving in incarnation and salvation and it is χάρις (9.15) which is given to God in response to the gift of Jesus. However it is also χάρις that prompts the giving of the Macedonians (8.1), χάρις for the Macedonians to participate (8.4) and χάρις for the Corinthians to give (8.6,7). Harris thus sees Paul as presenting a circle of grace: 'God gives his "grace" to his people (8:1, 9:14), who then give a "gift of grace" (8:7), which prompts the giving of "thanks" (εὐ-χαρισ-τία, 9:11b-13) to God.'¹¹⁰⁸ Contributing to the collection is thus placed within God's grace, generosity and salvation.

¹¹⁰⁰ Barnett, *Second*, 389.

¹¹⁰¹ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 399.

¹¹⁰² Matera, *Corinthians*, 186.

¹¹⁰³ Harris, *Second*, 559-560.

¹¹⁰⁴ Hughes, *Second*, 294. NB also the range of meanings in BDAG, 1079-1081.

¹¹⁰⁵ Griffith, 'Abounding,' 11.

¹¹⁰⁶ O'Mahony, *Persuasion*, 150.

¹¹⁰⁷ Barclay, 'Because,' 1.

¹¹⁰⁸ Harris, *Second*, 650. See also Becker, *Χάρις*, 144.

Paul also uses the word λειτουργία (9.12), which could be used in a number of contexts: public service of citizens, pagan religious service and Jewish religious contexts, ‘in our lit. almost always used w. some sort of relig. connotation.’¹¹⁰⁹ ‘In Athenian democracy this word was used to denote a public service undertaken by private citizens at their own expense.’¹¹¹⁰ Such public service could include supporting events, such as drama; institutions; or other public activity, for example, training gymnasts.¹¹¹¹ It was also used in both Jewish (Num 8.22; Exod 37.19; Josephus *J.W.* 1.26) and pagan worship (*Diod. Sic.* 1.21.7) for cultic service.¹¹¹² Downs and Hanson both argue that Paul has deliberately chosen the word because of its religious and cultic associations.¹¹¹³ Indeed Downs argues that Paul has used the language ‘to frame the Jerusalem fund as a religious offering.’¹¹¹⁴

Paul uses λειτουργία in conjunction with διακονία: ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας ταύτης (9.12), and this may help us clarify whether Paul does have a theological / religious background in mind. Like χάρις, διακονία is used repeatedly by Paul through the letter with a range of meanings,¹¹¹⁵ for example: in 3.3, to describe the way the Corinthians have been served by Paul with the gospel; in 3.7 and 9 to contrast the ministries of the old and new covenants; in 4.1 and 5.18 to describe the ministry received from God; in 5.18 of the ministry of reconciliation; and in 6.3 and 11.8 to refer to Paul’s ministry. Yet here, in chapters 8 and 9, Paul uses the word to describe administering the gift (8.19–20) and the gift itself (9.12–13). In 9.13 as we have seen the ministry is linked to glorifying God and Paul thus links the διακονία of the gospel to the διακονία of the gift and its administration to glorifying God. Therefore when he uses λειτουργία Paul probably does have a religious / theological background in mind.

Two other words Paul uses that have theological emphasis are κοινωνία and εὐλογία. Κοινωνία is used in 8.4 and 9.13 in the context of the Corinthians participating in and sharing in the collection.¹¹¹⁶ Paul’s use of κοινωνία also brings to mind the descriptions of the early church in Acts and the role κοινωνία has in those descriptions.¹¹¹⁷ It is possible that Paul has in mind some of what he has seen

¹¹⁰⁹ BDAG, 591.

¹¹¹⁰ Watson, *Second*, 100.

¹¹¹¹ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 443; Strachan, *Second*, 144.

¹¹¹² Hanson, *Second*, 72–3, Strachan, *Second*, 144.

¹¹¹³ Downs, *Offering*, 120, 123, 130, Hanson, *Second*, 72–73. Contra Betz, *Corinthians*, 117.

¹¹¹⁴ Downs, *Offering*, 130.

¹¹¹⁵ Keener, *Corinthians*, 203.

¹¹¹⁶ Martin, *Corinthians*, 254.

¹¹¹⁷ See §3.2.1.1.

and heard of the Jerusalem community as he uses the word. However more pertinently Paul uses κοινωνία in Philippians. Briones has analysed Paul's description of his κοινωνία with the Philippians and argues that it is a three-way partnership that includes God and involves sharing in suffering and in gift.¹¹¹⁸ He then compares the Philippians to the Corinthians and argues that the Corinthians 'acted as if gifts ended with them rather than handing them onto others'¹¹¹⁹ so that part of what Paul is doing in 1 and 2 Corinthians is to encourage the Corinthians to see themselves in this three way κοινωνία.¹¹²⁰ Thus by using κοινωνία Paul reminds the Corinthians of their fellowship and partnership with other believers and with God and thus their call to participate in the collection.

Paul also refers to the gift as εὐλογία (9.5, 6), a word that can be used to mean '*praise*', '*false eloquence, flattery*' (Rom 16.18), '*act or benefit of blessing, blessing*' (Rom 15.29; Gal 3.14; 1 Cor 10.16; Josh 15.19 LXX) or '*generous gift, bounty*'.¹¹²¹ Thus, while Paul seems to use εὐλογία in 2 Cor 9.5b as gift and in 2 Cor 9.6 as bounty, Paul's use of εὐλογία would probably remind the Corinthians of God's blessing (indeed BDAG suggests the use in 2 Cor 9.5a could be either blessing or gift),¹¹²² and points to the collection as being a theological act.

Furnish argues that these theological words imply that Paul is showing unity between Jewish believers and Gentile believers as part of the outcome of the collection.¹¹²³ Matera similarly sees the fact that Paul does not mention money in chapters 8 and 9 as indicating that the collection is not simply about economic assistance.¹¹²⁴ More generally these theological words indicate the way Paul sees the collection as key, both as part of the Corinthians' faith, but also as imaging God's character and actions.

¹¹¹⁸ Briones, *Policy*, 116-29. Phil 4.14-15.

¹¹¹⁹ Briones, *Policy*, 150.

¹¹²⁰ Briones argues that in 1 Corinthians Paul presents God as the source of χάρις, Paul as a mediator of χάρις and the Corinthians as unworthy recipients. (Briones, *Policy*, 153-57). Ogereau argues that Paul's use of κοινωνία together with ἰσότης points to him not simply advocating charity but to him reforming 'structural inequalities' (Julien M. Ogereau, 'The Jerusalem Collection as Κοινωνία: Paul's Global Politics of Socio-Economic Equality and Solidarity,' *NTS* 58 (2012) 360-78, citing 377).

¹¹²¹ BDAG, 408-09.

¹¹²² BDAG, 408-09.

¹¹²³ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 411.

¹¹²⁴ Matera, *Corinthians*, 5.

5.3.6. Questions about Paul's Argument

Before we look at other NT texts that may shed light on the collection, we consider two questions about Paul's argument to the Corinthians, which will help us understand more of Paul's theological basis for the collection.

First, in using the example of the Macedonians is Paul manipulating the Corinthians? For in 8.1–5 he uses the example of the Macedonians' giving to exhort the Corinthians to participate in the collection, yet he then reveals in 9.2 that he has been boasting to the Macedonians about the Corinthians. 'Paul holds up the Macedonians to the Corinthians and the Corinthians to the Macedonians as examples to imitate' (Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Comm. 2 Cor.* 332). Best suggests that Paul is setting them off against each other and is more concerned with the ends than the means.¹¹²⁵ Shaw also sees Paul as playing off 'one congregation against another to encourage their generosity'¹¹²⁶ in a way that shows deviousness and manipulation.¹¹²⁷

In contrast to this, Hughes sees this not as playing off one against the other, but rather encouraging them to fulfill their commitment. He notes that the past year had involved changes, which meant they had failed to complete the collection.¹¹²⁸ The Corinthians had begun their involvement well before the Macedonians.¹¹²⁹ At the point that Paul speaks to the Macedonians about the collection, he could speak of the Corinthians' zeal and expect them to be well on their way with collecting.¹¹³⁰ After this, it is likely that the conflict and misunderstandings 'between him and the Corinthian community severely impeded the progress of the collection.'¹¹³¹ Thus when Paul discovers this and writes to the Corinthians, he is concerned to draw the Corinthians back into involvement in the collection and as part of that to preserve their reputation.¹¹³² Hughes argues that Paul's concern here is not their willingness but their organisational ability.¹¹³³

While we follow Hughes' reconstruction of the timeline of the Corinthians' involvement in the collection, we would question the Corinthians' willingness to

¹¹²⁵ Best, *Second*, 84.

¹¹²⁶ Graham Shaw, *The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983, 116.

¹¹²⁷ Shaw, *Cost*, 117.

¹¹²⁸ Hughes, *Second*, 324.

¹¹²⁹ Barrett, *Second*, 224–5.

¹¹³⁰ Barrett, *Second*, 233–4.

¹¹³¹ Matera, *Corinthians*, 202.

¹¹³² Harris, *Second*, 626, Barnett, *Second*, 435.

¹¹³³ Hughes, *Second*, 325.

contribute at the point Paul writes 2 Corinthians. For although Paul appears confident that the Corinthians were willing in the past, the amount of time Paul spends exhorting them with reasons to be involved in the collection, suggests that they may also have lost some of their willingness.

The second question is what Paul means by using *ὁμολογία*, which can mean an ‘**expression of allegiance as an action, *professing, confessing***’ or a ‘**statement of allegiance, as content of an action, *confession, acknowledgement that one makes***’.¹¹³⁴

Betz argues that it indicates ‘sign of submission’ to the church in Jerusalem and ‘means that the donors have entered into a contractual agreement’,¹¹³⁵ which is why the giving is useful to the Corinthians.¹¹³⁶ Betz acknowledges that Paul would disagree with such a submission and agreement and so suggests he is quoting from a *homologia* document.¹¹³⁷ These documents codified the legal process of donation and were to ‘establish personal relations’.¹¹³⁸ Such documents include ‘legal and political terminology’¹¹³⁹ and an explanation of why the donation would be useful to its recipients.¹¹⁴⁰ However there are other ways this phrase can be interpreted which would seem to fit better with the context. Harris suggests various possible meanings: ‘the obedience consisting of your confession’, ‘the obedience prompted by your confession’, ‘obedience to your confession’ and ‘your professed obedience’.¹¹⁴¹ Barnett sees Paul as referring to the gift as proof of their obedience.¹¹⁴² Héring argues that their participation in the collection proves their faith and generosity,¹¹⁴³ and Hughes that it will give proof of the faith of the Gentile Christians.¹¹⁴⁴ Their participation will also show the ‘reality of (their) love’ and that they are one body.¹¹⁴⁵ ‘The service of the Gentile churches to the poor saints is a part, or aspect of their confession of faith in the Gospel and shows this confession to be not a matter of words only but genuine obedience to God who is the author of

¹¹³⁴ BDAG, 709.

¹¹³⁵ Betz, *Corinthians*, 122.

¹¹³⁶ Betz, *Corinthians*, 124.

¹¹³⁷ Betz, *Corinthians*, 124.

¹¹³⁸ Betz, *Corinthians*, 123.

¹¹³⁹ Betz, *Corinthians*, 123.

¹¹⁴⁰ Betz, *Corinthians*, 124.

¹¹⁴¹ Harris, *Second*, 653–54.

¹¹⁴² Barnett, *Second*, 445.

¹¹⁴³ Héring, *Second*, 68.

¹¹⁴⁴ Hughes, *Second*, 338.

¹¹⁴⁵ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 417. ‘The test of obedience (2.8) and the test of love / loyalty, (8.8) is now a test of their being Christian at all’ (McCant, *Corinthians*, 98).

the Gospel.¹¹⁴⁶ Spencer notes that giving itself is confession because giving requires trust.¹¹⁴⁷ On each of these views, Paul links the reception of the gift with recognition of their faith and confession of the gospel.

Having considered Paul's account of the collection in 2 Cor 8 and 9 we turn to other passages where the collection may be referenced to see whether there is further evidence to augment our picture of the theology and practice provided by the example in 2 Cor 8 and 9.

5.4. Other Texts

5.4.1. 1 Corinthians 16.1–4

In 1 Cor 16.1–4 Paul gives the Corinthians instructions about the collection. His use of *περὶ δέ* indicates that the subject is one that was known to him and the Corinthians¹¹⁴⁸ and probably that the Corinthians had asked him about it.¹¹⁴⁹

Murphy O'Connor asserts this would indicate that there had been a request or invitation for their involvement prior to 1 Corinthians¹¹⁵⁰ and Downs suggests that Paul may have written to them about it in the letter referred to in 1 Cor 5.9.¹¹⁵¹ However, while it is clear the Corinthians knew about the collection, this may not have been from Paul.

Paul refers to the fact that it is not just the Corinthians that he has given directions to, but also the churches of Galatia which may indicate the Corinthians had heard about the collection by some means from Galatia,¹¹⁵² but it would also remind the Corinthians that the collection was 'keine Augenblicksüberlegung'.¹¹⁵³

Paul uses *λογεία* to describe the collection, which Fee notes is a 'technical term for the actual activity of "taking up" the contributions'.¹¹⁵⁴ *Λογεία* is used only here in the NT and was also used of religious collections.¹¹⁵⁵

¹¹⁴⁶ Barrett, *Second*, 240–41. Also Lim, 'Generosity,' 29.

¹¹⁴⁷ Spencer, *Corinthians*, 163.

¹¹⁴⁸ See §4.4.1.

¹¹⁴⁹ Bruce, *Corinthians*, 157. Schrage asserts that Paul had not instructed the Corinthians about the collection during his stay (Schrage, *Brief*, 4:425). Fee argues Paul is possibly responding to their letter and that the Corinthians already know for whom the collection is intended because the opening verse lacks detailed information (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, 809, 811).

¹¹⁵⁰ Murphy-O'Connor, *Theology*, 79.

¹¹⁵¹ Downs, *Offering*, 40.

¹¹⁵² Schrage, *Brief*, 4:427.

¹¹⁵³ Schrage, *Brief*, 4:427.

¹¹⁵⁴ Fee, *First*, 812.

¹¹⁵⁵ BDAG, 597. See also MM, 377; P. Oxy. 11.239.

Paul's instructions are for each person to set something aside each week and Georgi argues that Paul focuses the Corinthians on taking personal initiative, and that the set aside money would have been pooled just before it was transported.¹¹⁵⁶ Downs similarly argues that this instruction suggests that the congregation was not regularly administering funds.¹¹⁵⁷ The ἐαυτῷ would at the least imply personal initiative and possibly implies storing the money individually, although Downs argues it is not stored at home because of the references to Sunday and to not needing collections on his arrival.¹¹⁵⁸ The believers are to set aside ὅ τι ἐν εὐοδῶται (1 Cor 16.2) indicating their giving is to be related to their financial situation:¹¹⁵⁹ 'in accordance with how you may fare.'¹¹⁶⁰ Paul is concerned that the collecting should happen before his arrival and as Schrage points out this provides the opportunity to collect more over time.¹¹⁶¹ Schrage also suggests other possible reasons: that Paul may not want to be involved in the actual collections; that Paul wants to encourage the Corinthians' partnership and involvement; or, which he sees as less likely, that there is some situation of mistrust.¹¹⁶² Thiselton suggests that Paul wishes to avoid a last minute appeal to the wealthy.¹¹⁶³ While Paul does not specifically say this, it seems plausible as it would be the wealthy who could more easily give without saving up and Paul does emphasize the involvement of ἕκαστος ὑμῶν (1 Cor 16.2).

Paul also indicates that the Corinthians will choose delegates to accompany the gift to Jerusalem (1 Cor 16.3).¹¹⁶⁴ Paul is uncertain about whether he will make the journey to Jerusalem and will only do so ἐὰν δὲ ἄξιον (1 Cor 16.4). There is some question about what the decision is contingent upon. Suggestions include: the attitude of the community, the value of the collection, and Paul's evaluation of his mission plans and the situation in Jerusalem.¹¹⁶⁵ While Fee argues that it cannot refer to the gift as the adjective is impersonal and followed by an articular infinitive

¹¹⁵⁶ Georgi, *Remembering*, 54; Fee, *First*, 813.

¹¹⁵⁷ Downs, *Offering*, 101; Schrage, *Brief*, 4:429.

¹¹⁵⁸ Downs, *Offering*, 128-29.

¹¹⁵⁹ Schrage, *Brief*, 4:429.

¹¹⁶⁰ Thiselton, *Epistle*, 1323.

¹¹⁶¹ Schrage, *Brief*, 4:429-30.

¹¹⁶² Schrage, *Brief*, 4:429-30.

¹¹⁶³ Thiselton, *Epistle*, 1324.

¹¹⁶⁴ Bruce, *Corinthians*, 158.

¹¹⁶⁵ Schrage, *Brief*, 431-32.

of purpose¹¹⁶⁶ and that therefore Paul's decision is dependent on how he thinks the gift will be received,¹¹⁶⁷ there is insufficient evidence to be certain.

Thrall notes that in 1 Corinthians Paul uses imperatives, while in 2 Cor 8 and 9 he makes requests of them.¹¹⁶⁸ This would fit with the way that Paul has less certainty about the Corinthians' response because of the various issues of contention between them, but also is indicative of the different questions Paul is addressing: in 1 Corinthians how to give, in 2 Corinthians motivation and rationale for giving.

5.4.2. *Acts*

In Acts there is the challenge of discerning which parts of the narrative may refer to the collection. Barrett notes that given that the collection was 'one of [Paul's] major activities in the middle fifties', there is little in Acts unless 11.27–30 is misplaced.¹¹⁶⁹

Furnish argues that, while Acts 21.17 does not mention the fund, it shows its glad receipt.¹¹⁷⁰ Nickle similarly argues that the fund is alluded to and well received and that the opposition that is faced is Jewish not Jewish Christian.¹¹⁷¹

While most scholars agree there is a paucity of evidence and suggest a range of reasons for this, Downs argues that Acts fails to mention the collection at all.¹¹⁷² He considers the two places that are sometimes considered possible references and argues that neither of them are. He argues that Acts 11.27–30 is an authentic tradition responding to the prophecy of famine and suggests that it may be linked to Gal 2 but not to the collection referred to in 2 Cor 8 and 9.¹¹⁷³ Downs then turns to Acts 24.17 and argues that in this visit to Jerusalem there are a number of things that point to the visit not being the visit where Paul brings the collection.

First, Luke presents the reason for Paul's visit as one of divine necessity,¹¹⁷⁴ whereas Paul in his writing indicates that the purpose of the journey is to transport the collection. Secondly, Luke recounts Paul presenting his reason for coming to Jerusalem as coming to worship (Acts 24.11)¹¹⁷⁵ and in his speech Paul presents

¹¹⁶⁶ Fee, *First*, 816.

¹¹⁶⁷ Fee, *First*, 816; also Thiselton, *Epistle*, 1326.

¹¹⁶⁸ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:519.

¹¹⁶⁹ Barrett, *Second*, 217.

¹¹⁷⁰ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 453.

¹¹⁷¹ Nickle, *Collection*, 70.

¹¹⁷² David J. Downs, 'Paul's Collection and the Book of Acts Revisited,' *NTS* 52 (2006) 50–70, citing 52.

¹¹⁷³ Downs, 'Collection,' 53–54.

¹¹⁷⁴ Downs, 'Collection,' 64.

¹¹⁷⁵ Downs, 'Collection,' 65.

himself as a faithful Jew.¹¹⁷⁶ Therefore Downs argues that ‘Acts 24:17 far from being a reference to the collection, identifies Paul before his accusers as a faithful Jew whose individual piety is demonstrated by almsgiving and worship’.¹¹⁷⁷

Downs asserts that Acts does not refer to the collection and therefore cannot be used as evidence about it. Downs raises important questions about the limitations of Acts as evidence about the collection, however it is not clear that his arguments about Paul’s visit in Acts 24.17 preclude the visit being multi-faceted and including the collection even if Luke does not present information about it. For example, the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19.21), Paul’s assertions of divine necessity (Acts 21.13), Paul’s explanation of his purpose as worship (Acts 24.11) and of his actions as offering alms and sacrifices (Acts 24.17), do not necessarily mean that he could not also see part of the divine necessity or the worship as encompassing the collection, nor that the alms were necessarily for the temple rather than the believers (particularly if Paul saw the church as the inheritors of the role of God’s chosen people, given that ἔθνος (Acts 24.17) can refer to a group of people as well as a nation).¹¹⁷⁸

If Paul’s visit in Acts 24.17 is one that included bringing the collection, it is notable that there is no mention of a representative from Corinth among those who are described as accompanying him (Acts 20.4).¹¹⁷⁹ The length of this list and the areas from which it draws people hints that this visit may have involved the collection. However the lack of information raises the question about why Luke does not give more details or at least explicitly mention the collection. Nickle and Downs suggest a variety of possible reasons: maybe Luke did not have access to the epistles¹¹⁸⁰ or did not know about the collection, or if he did know about the collection, maybe he was unaware of its significance, knew that it might be considered illegal, or that it was rejected.¹¹⁸¹ Nickle notes that if Luke is trying to present a positive picture for the Romans, then, if the collection raised tensions with the Jews, Luke may have omitted it.¹¹⁸² Nickle also suggests that if the Christians had broken from Judaism then the collection could be seen as illegal,¹¹⁸³ however

¹¹⁷⁶ Downs, ‘Collection,’ 66.

¹¹⁷⁷ Downs, *Offering*, 63.

¹¹⁷⁸ BDAG, 276.

¹¹⁷⁹ Tasker, *Corinthians*, 131.

¹¹⁸⁰ Nickle, *Collection*, 149.

¹¹⁸¹ Downs, ‘Collection,’ 69; Downs, *Offering*, 69; Nickle, *Collection*, 149.

¹¹⁸² Nickle, *Collection*, 149.

¹¹⁸³ Nickle, *Collection*, 150.

this seems unlikely as the final break was later. Additionally Thrall suggests that it is not clear that such a collection would be illegal,¹¹⁸⁴ but she does argue that, if the collection did not achieve Paul's aims, and if Luke wanted to present a positive picture of Christianity for Jews and Romans, he may have omitted the collection.¹¹⁸⁵ While we see Paul's visit in Acts 24.17 as including the collection, we agree that Acts provides insufficient evidence to add to the picture of the collection that Paul presents in 2 Cor 8 and 9. Acts does however raise the question of how well known the collection was and what the outcome of its delivery was.

5.4.3. *Galatians 2.10*

Galatians 2.1-10 is often seen as an account of the agreement between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders which expected Gentile Christians to give to the Jerusalem believers almost in return for the blessing they had received in the gospel. Lim thus reminds us that the poor of verse 10 have often been seen as the poor in Jerusalem.¹¹⁸⁶

Georgi sees the passage as an account of the agreement between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders which occurred at a convention in Jerusalem in which the Gentile believers were granted independence and recognition of their faith,¹¹⁸⁷ and the special position of believers in Jerusalem was acknowledged¹¹⁸⁸ which included their role as watchmen and of making known the coming return of the king.¹¹⁸⁹ Gentile Christians were to grant 'recognition to the exemplary performance on the part of their fellow believers in Jerusalem'.¹¹⁹⁰ Thus Georgi sees the agreement as one that was about 'unity' between Jewish and Gentile leaders but not about authority of one group over the other.¹¹⁹¹ Georgi then sees this agreement as breaking down¹¹⁹² in Gal 2.11-21. Therefore when Paul returns to the collection, he does not talk about the agreement, but rather pursues it as a 'purely Pauline initiative within the apostle's own congregations only'.¹¹⁹³

¹¹⁸⁴ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:518.

¹¹⁸⁵ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:517-18.

¹¹⁸⁶ Lim, 'Generosity,' 23.

¹¹⁸⁷ Georgi, *Remembering*, 29, 31.

¹¹⁸⁸ Georgi, *Remembering*, 33.

¹¹⁸⁹ Georgi, *Remembering*, 37-38.

¹¹⁹⁰ Georgi, *Remembering*, 38.

¹¹⁹¹ Georgi, *Remembering*, 42.

¹¹⁹² Georgi, *Remembering*, 46.

¹¹⁹³ Georgi, *Remembering*, 49.

However as Horrell points out Gal 2.1–10 does not specifically mention the collection and could be more generally about help for the poor.¹¹⁹⁴ Key to this is whether ‘the poor’ was a specific term to designate believers in Jerusalem. Longenecker argues that the association is a late one. By the late fourth century the association did exist, but before that the term tended to be seen more generally¹¹⁹⁵ and so Longenecker argues that the early fathers do not use ‘poor’ to designate Jerusalem Jesus followers.¹¹⁹⁶ For example Tertullian in *Marc.* 5.3 sees Gal 2.10 as referring more generally to care for the poor. Longenecker argues that late fourth and early fifth century writers started to use the term through identifying later Ebionites with the early Jerusalem believers and points out ‘The linking of the Ebionite name to Jerusalem Jesus-followers has no precedent in the extant discussion of the early Jesus movement prior to Epiphanius’ (d. 403).¹¹⁹⁷ Therefore it seems likely that Gal 2.10 ‘demarcates caring for the poor without geographical restriction or specificity’.¹¹⁹⁸

This raises the question of why such an injunction was given. Longenecker argues that the Jerusalem leaders were not worried that Paul would be unconcerned about the poor, but rather that they were ‘worried about the credentials of his target audience’.¹¹⁹⁹ Pagans were not well known for their care for the poor and it is possible that the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem were trying to ensure that this part of what it meant to be a believer was not lost. Longenecker suggests that the decision being made in the discussions was ‘about the moral matrix that was to mark out all communities of Jesus-followers, and at the heart of that matrix lies care for the vulnerable.’¹²⁰⁰

Nickle takes a slightly different tack and sees Galatians 2.1–10 and Acts 15 as describing the same meeting and agreement. He argues that ‘The “Decrees” were formulated not as the fundamental requirement which a Gentile had to fulfill in order to become a Christian but as those basic regulations necessary to make full fellowship between Gentile and Jewish Christians within the same Christian

¹¹⁹⁴ David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference. A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics*, London: T&T Clark, 2005, 232.

¹¹⁹⁵ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 158–82.

¹¹⁹⁶ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 172.

¹¹⁹⁷ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 171. Epiphanius *Pan.* 30.17.

¹¹⁹⁸ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 182.

¹¹⁹⁹ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 203 (his italics).

¹²⁰⁰ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 211.

community possible'.¹²⁰¹ Longenecker sees this including care for the poor but excluding circumcision.¹²⁰²

As argued in chapter 3 we see the visit in Gal 2 referring to the visit in Acts 11. Therefore it seems likely that Gal 2 is more generally about the poor given that the identification of οἱ πτωχοί with the Jerusalem believers did not happen until significantly after Galatians was written. While Gal 2 indicates Paul's desire for care for the poor, and reminds us that this was an ongoing concern for Paul and therefore a motivation for the collection, it does not refer to an agreement for Gentile Christians to make a collection for the believers in Jerusalem.

5.4.4. *Romans 15.25-32*

In Rom 15.25-32 Paul writes to the Romans, probably just before he leaves Corinth,¹²⁰³ and reports that he is on his way to Jerusalem (Rom 15.25). Macedonia and Achaia have contributed to the collection, which presumably means that Corinth gave¹²⁰⁴ and Paul specifies that the collection is for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem (Rom 15.26), which suggests 'a socio-economic group within the Jerusalem community'.¹²⁰⁵

Paul's double use of εὐδόκησαν (Rom 15.26,27) points to the contributions being given with goodwill¹²⁰⁶ and voluntarily / willingly.¹²⁰⁷ However, Paul also argues that those who have contributed owe the contribution¹²⁰⁸ in some way and describes it as material blessing in return for spiritual blessing (Rom 15.27). For some scholars the reception of the gift of the gospel with its Jewish Jerusalem based heritage causes a debt.¹²⁰⁹ Fitzmyer suggests that the obligation was felt by the contributors.¹²¹⁰ As Joubert points out this could have been because of their Gentile background and suggests that for those of Jewish background reciprocity would not necessarily have been seen as important.¹²¹¹ Therefore it could be that the sense of

¹²⁰¹ Nickle, *Collection*, 55.

¹²⁰² Longenecker, *Remembering*, 203.

¹²⁰³ Furnish, *Corinthians*, 410.

¹²⁰⁴ Watson, *Second*, 12; Horrell, *Solidarity*, 233; Furnish, *Corinthians*, 453.

¹²⁰⁵ Murphy-O'Connor, *Theology*, 75.

¹²⁰⁶ William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902, 412.

¹²⁰⁷ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988, 520, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993, 722.

¹²⁰⁸ Downs, *Offering*, 11.

¹²⁰⁹ Sanday and Headlam, *Commentary*, 412; Morris, *Epistle*, 521

¹²¹⁰ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 723.

¹²¹¹ Stephan Joubert, *Paul as Benefactor*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, 129.

debt Paul describes is the believer's sense of debt rather than his description of the obligation that they should feel. Similarly Watson points out that Paul 'chooses to refer first to the attitude of those obliged, rather than to their state of obligation.'¹²¹² Dunn argues the obligation referred to partly relates to the obligation to care for the poor more generally.¹²¹³ While Paul includes the idea of reciprocity and obligation, he also emphasizes the fact that the collection was willing and freely given.¹²¹⁴

Downs helpfully notes cultic metaphors in Rom 15.16 and in Rom 15.25-32 and therefore argues that, for Paul, an overarching metaphor for the collection is worship.¹²¹⁵

Paul also requests the readers to pray for him, both that he will be kept safe from unbelievers in Judaea, but also that the collection may be favourably received (Rom 15.31). This request would suggest that either the collection may not be fulfilling a particular agreement¹²¹⁶ or that some breaking of the agreement has happened that makes it less likely to be accepted.

We noted in our analysis of Gal 2.10 that Paul seems to be expressing a duty for believers to be concerned for the poor more generally, not simply for the Jerusalem poor. This is seen more widely in his letters. Longenecker examines Paul's letters and highlights that in four of the seven undisputed letters, Paul includes care for the poor (Gal 6.9-10; 2 Cor 8-9; 1 Thess 4.9-12, 5.14-15; Rom 12.8-10, 13).¹²¹⁷ Similarly in 1 Cor 16.1-4 and 2 Cor 8-9 contributing to the collection is presented not as a requirement of the Gentiles, but as 'voluntary expressions of grace for other Jesus-followers'.¹²¹⁸ Even in Rom 15 where Paul speaks of debtors, he also implies an element of choice and the voluntary nature of the contributions in his use of εὐδόκησαν (Rom 15.26,27).¹²¹⁹ It is thus likely that Paul saw concern for the poor as key to the character of Christians,¹²²⁰ but one that

¹²¹² Watson, 'Collection,' 161.

¹²¹³ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2 vols, Dallas: Word, 1988, 2:874.

¹²¹⁴ Dunn, *Romans*, 2:875.

¹²¹⁵ Downs, *Offering*, 154-56.

¹²¹⁶ Downs, *Offering*, 36. Contra Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007, 927.

¹²¹⁷ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 140-46; Watson, 'Collection,' 157-58. Hughes notes that Paul's visits to Jerusalem all have some connection to those in need in Jerusalem. (Hughes, *Second*, 284-285).

¹²¹⁸ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 186.

¹²¹⁹ Jewett notes that goodwill and obligation were not seen as mutually exclusive and argues for the collection to be part of 'mutual indebtedness that binds the ethnic branches of the church together' (Jewett, *Romans*, 930-31).

¹²²⁰ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 298.

was characterised by voluntary (albeit expected) giving, and was part of a wider giving to and receiving from one another.

5.5. Questions about the collection

This section considers questions about the intended recipients and aim of the collection which arise from the NT texts about the collection. The answers to these questions inform our conclusion about the example of sharing the collection in 2 Cor 8 and 9 provides.

5.5.1. *For the Poor in Jerusalem or for All Believers in Jerusalem?*

We have noted that Paul sees concern for the poor as a key part of the Christian life. In Galatians Paul argues that οἱ πτωχοί should be remembered, yet as we have seen this is unlikely to be specifically about the collection. In the passages specifically about the collection, Paul refers to the recipients as οἱ ἅγιοι, except for Romans 15.26 where he designates the recipients as the οἱ πτωχοί τῶν ἁγίων.¹²²¹ Therefore there is the question of whether Paul aims the collection to be for the poor in Jerusalem or for all in Jerusalem. Georgi sees οἱ πτωχοί as titular and referring to all in Jerusalem.¹²²² We have argued earlier¹²²³ that the link between the title and the community is late and would not be applicable at the time when Paul is writing. Similarly Horrell and Thrall argue that Paul does not use it as a title, but rather that the collection is aimed for those in need in Jerusalem.¹²²⁴ However Thrall does note that it is possible (given the evidence within Acts) that the whole Jerusalem community took care of those in need within the community and that the collection may have been handed over to the leaders within the community for them to distribute to those in need.¹²²⁵

5.5.2. *Why Jerusalem?*

However if Paul's aim in the collection is the relief of need, why is the gift for those in need in Jerusalem and not elsewhere? Hughes argues that it is because Paul sees the Gentiles as having a spiritual debt to the believers in Jerusalem (Rom 15.27; 1 Cor 9.11).¹²²⁶ Others argue that it is because of the specific situation in

¹²²¹ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:506.

¹²²² Georgi, *Remembering*, 33–34.

¹²²³ See §5.4.3.

¹²²⁴ Horrell, *Solidarity*, 235; Thrall, *2 Corinthians*, 2:509.

¹²²⁵ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:509.

¹²²⁶ Hughes, *Second*, 286.

Jerusalem.¹²²⁷ We saw in the chapter on Acts some of the particular needs in Jerusalem.¹²²⁸ Strachan argues in addition that the congregation was made up of the poorer classes and that the number of pilgrims led to an increase in demand for goods and thus an increase in prices.¹²²⁹ Martin and Best both see the common fund as playing a role.¹²³⁰ However the common fund may be seen as an attempt to mitigate the situation, rather than the cause of the situation: 'surely it is far more reasonable to understand it as an effect of the want of the majority, a measure spontaneously designed to counteract as far as possible the prevailing indigence and successfully so, for the time being at least, as the context shows (v. 34).'¹²³¹

While Héring acknowledges that we do not know of the existence of other collections not to Jerusalem, he sees Paul in 2 Cor 9.14 as stressing 'that generosity could be practiced in other similar urgent cases.'¹²³² Therefore it is likely that the gift is for Jerusalem because of the specific needs that existed there.

5.5.3. *Paul's Aim in the Collection.*

Nickle argues that Paul has three aims with the collection, the relief of need, unity of believers and an eschatological role.¹²³³ We have already argued that the collection was for the poor in Jerusalem rather than the whole community in Jerusalem and that it was sent to Jerusalem because of specific needs. While there are other possible factors in Jerusalem as the destination of the collection (as we saw in Rom 15.27), Paul makes it clear that such contributions may be expected between other congregations and indeed from Jerusalem as and when their situation changed (8.14). We have also argued that Paul saw such practical concern as part and parcel of Christian life and Kreitzer argues such action was in continuity with Jewish practice.¹²³⁴

However several scholars argue that Paul dreams of the collection accomplishing more than relief of need and see Paul hoping for unity between believers with Jews and Gentile being brought together.¹²³⁵ Nickle argues that the collection provides proof of the Gentiles' faith¹²³⁶ and that the number of

¹²²⁷ Spencer, *Corinthians*, 138.

¹²²⁸ See §3.2.2.

¹²²⁹ Strachan, *Second*, 131–32.

¹²³⁰ Best, *Second*, 76; Martin, *Corinthians*, 256.

¹²³¹ Hughes, *Second*, 284.

¹²³² Héring, *Second*, 68.

¹²³³ Nickle, *Collection*, 100.

¹²³⁴ Kreitzer, *Corinthians*, 85.

¹²³⁵ Harris, *Second*, 553; Martin, *Corinthians*, 251; Matera, *Corinthians*, 209; Nickle, *Collection*, 9.

¹²³⁶ Nickle, *Collection*, 114, 119.

representatives of the Gentile Christian communities accompanying it is indicative of Paul's desire for it to result in greater unity.¹²³⁷ As the faith of the Gentile Christians is recognized,¹²³⁸ Best argues that Paul hopes it will lead to their acceptance on an equal basis.¹²³⁹ Georgi argues that this aim explains Paul's change of plan in Acts 20.4 (which he argues is an incomplete account) and that the threat from the Jews led to the believers in Jerusalem being in a difficult situation. If they accepted the collection, it would lead to risk for them and if they refused it would lead to greater tension with the church.¹²⁴⁰

While it seems likely that Paul was desirous of greater unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians,¹²⁴¹ and that such unity may be part of what he hopes the collection will accomplish, it seems unlikely that it is his primary objective. The Gentile church was not monochrome and the Corinthian congregation was mixed and included both Gentiles and Jews.¹²⁴² Therefore it is not simply a gift from Gentile believers to Jewish believers. Also Paul asserts that such gifts may be expected to happen in reverse and between other groups. However Paul does see increased affection between the Corinthian and Jerusalem believers (9.14)¹²⁴³ as one of the outcomes of the collection and this is natural given the way gift-exchange was key to relationship formation in the Graeco-Roman world.¹²⁴⁴ Also as Hughes points out, it is likely that the collection would have increased unity more widely than simply with Jerusalem: it may well have increased unity between those who contributed to the collection.¹²⁴⁵

Nickle, Furnish and Martin all argue that there is also an eschatological role to the collection.¹²⁴⁶ Furnish argues that the Gentile delegation and the collection is meant to show the success of the gospel amongst the Gentiles, prompting jealousy amongst the Jews and leading to Jews accepting the gospel. Nickle sees this happening through a reversal of the order of OT prophecies¹²⁴⁷ in Isa 55.10 and Hos 10.12, whereby the Gentile believers 'were coming as the true Israel' rather than as

¹²³⁷ Nickle, *Collection*, 130.

¹²³⁸ Betz, *Corinthians*, 126.

¹²³⁹ Best, *Second*, 87.

¹²⁴⁰ Georgi, *Remembering*, 122-27.

¹²⁴¹ Paul elsewhere writes of this unity being effected through Jesus (Gal 3.26-29).

¹²⁴² See §4.3.

¹²⁴³ Héring, *Second*, 68; Lambrecht, *Second*, 152.

¹²⁴⁴ Joubert, *Paul*, 150, 153.

¹²⁴⁵ Hughes, *Second*, 340.

¹²⁴⁶ Nickle, *Collection*, 100; Furnish, *Corinthians*, 412; Martin, *Corinthians*, 251.

¹²⁴⁷ Nickle, *Collection*, 133.

‘the seekers and petitioners of Israel’.¹²⁴⁸ However, as Horrell and Thrall point out, for the collection to fit with Paul’s argument in Romans 9–11, full evangelisation would need to have happened (Rom 11.11–12, 25–27)¹²⁴⁹ and we would expect Paul to be on his final journey, rather than to be going onto Rome after his visit to Jerusalem.¹²⁵⁰ Downs also points out that Rom 15.14–32 ‘reveals no mention of the pilgrimage tradition in the one place within the Pauline correspondence in which the apostle reflects on the actual delivery of the collection to Jerusalem.’¹²⁵¹ Barnett argues there is no evidence in 2 Corinthians that Paul intends the collection to prompt an eschatological ingathering of Jews.¹²⁵² This suggests that Paul does not see the collection eschatologically, as does the fact he anticipates future possible collections (8.14).

Plummer and Spencer suggest a fourth possible motive and outcome of the collection. Plummer argues that the collection might well have increased Paul’s authority in Jerusalem, because it would have confirmed the success of Paul’s work; at the same time it could have increased Paul’s authority in Corinth as it pointed out Paul’s link with the mother church.¹²⁵³ In a similar vein, Spencer suggests that the collection is a test of the loyalty of the Corinthians to Paul.¹²⁵⁴

It is likely that Paul had a range of motives in mind. The evidence points to: the alleviating of need; increased unity, concern and care; and as an expression of thankfulness to God (9.12–15) being primary. It seems unlikely that Paul foresees the collection having a specifically eschatological role given that he foresees possible future collections and as it seems unlikely, given his travel plans, that he saw the full evangelisation of the Gentiles as having taken place.

5.6. The Example of Sharing in 2 Cor 8 and 9

Having considered 2 Cor 8 and 9 and other texts which may illuminate the collection, we now describe the example of the sharing in 2 Cor 8 and 9.

1. The example of sharing in 2 Cor 8 and 9 is one that is rooted in grace: it is God’s grace that provides for those who give and motivates them (8.1; 9.8, 14), and it is with grace that giving takes place (8.4, 6).

¹²⁴⁸ Nickle, *Collection*, 139.

¹²⁴⁹ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:513–14.

¹²⁵⁰ Horrell, *Solidarity*, 234.

¹²⁵¹ Downs, *Offering*, 9.

¹²⁵² Barnett, *Second*, 449–50.

¹²⁵³ Plummer, *Second*, 230.

¹²⁵⁴ Spencer, *Corinthians*, 130.

2. It is an example where giving / sharing is core to being a Christian (9.13).¹²⁵⁵ Paul persists in encouraging the Corinthians to give and addresses the collection even when there are issues between Paul and the Corinthians. Giving to other believers in need is part of the believers' faith, for example, the Macedonians give themselves to God, to Paul and to the collection (8.3-5). The giving to the collection is also seen as part of their confession of faith (9.13), as part of serving God and worshipping him (8.4-5; 9.12-13). Thus the Corinthians' participation in the collection will mean that their faith is recognized (9.13-14).
3. The example is one that is rooted in Jesus¹²⁵⁶ and his example (8.9).¹²⁵⁷
4. The example is one which provides for those in need (8.13-14).¹²⁵⁸
5. The giving is voluntary. Paul encourages rather than asks and focuses on the Corinthians taking their own decision to give (8.7, 8; 9.5, 7). The Macedonians and Titus give themselves voluntarily¹²⁵⁹ and the Corinthians themselves have already shown their willingness (8.11).¹²⁶⁰ However the fact that it is voluntary, does not preclude sacrificial giving (8.3, 9).¹²⁶¹ Participation in such giving is also a privilege (8.4).
6. The example is one where the giving is generous, it is based in God's grace and provision (8.1, 9; 9.8). Paul notes the generosity of the Macedonians (8.1-3). Such giving and generosity also result in blessing and reward (9.5-6, 10-11), particularly in God provision to continue giving (9.8, 10).
7. The example is one that is active and practical (8.11). While desire and decision to give are important it is not just enough to will to give or share, action should be involved: the giving needs to happen.¹²⁶²
8. The example is one where all are involved. In 1 Cor 16.2, Paul gives instructions for each person to set aside money for the collection and in 2 Corinthians, Paul encourages them to give cheerfully (8.12; 9.7).
9. Each person is to give in relation to what they have. The Macedonians gave beyond what they had (8.3) and Paul encourages the Corinthians to give

¹²⁵⁵ Murphy-O'Connor, *Theology*, 76; check Hanson, *Second*, 69.

¹²⁵⁶ Lim, 'Generosity,' 21.

¹²⁵⁷ Lim, 'Generosity,' 24.

¹²⁵⁸ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:511.

¹²⁵⁹ Harris, *Second*, 599.

¹²⁶⁰ Lim, 'Generosity,' 28.

¹²⁶¹ Hughes, *Second*, 288.

¹²⁶² Keener, *Corinthians*, 204.

according to what they have (8.12). It is not simply a matter of a set amount being given, but of individuals / communities making decisions in light of God's generosity and what they themselves have.

10. It is an example that is relational and has relational effects. The giving and sharing will lead to greater affection and prayer (9.14). Strengthened relationships will ensue, not simply between the Jerusalem and Corinthian believers but also probably between those who contribute to the collection.¹²⁶³
11. It is an example where there is potential reciprocity (8.13-14). Paul's aim is not one way giving, but provision for need in an ongoing relationship, which may change over time. It is based in relationship and responsibility, with the aim not of one group gaining at the expense of the other, but of equality and provision.
12. It is an example of giving where probity is important. Paul goes to great lengths to make sure that the collection is not just handled well, but that it is also seen to be handled with integrity (8.20-21).
13. In the whole example God is central. It is God who is the ultimate benefactor¹²⁶⁴ who provides so that the Corinthians may give (and probably who provides not only the resources but also the desire)¹²⁶⁵ and who will continue to provide (9.8, 10). It is thus that the thanksgiving and praise go to God, not the Corinthians, because it is he who is the ultimate provider (9.11-12, 15).

5.7. Comparisons

5.7.1. *Helena and Izates*

Having considered the example of sharing at a distance provided by 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, we now turn to look for suitable contemporary comparisons. We have already considered one 'at a distance' example in the response to the prophecy of famine recounted in Acts 11.¹²⁶⁶ When we looked at Acts 11, we compared it to the example of Helena and Izates, and to that of the *curator annonae*.¹²⁶⁷ We will compare the collection in 2 Cor 8 and 9 to these two examples, before moving to

¹²⁶³ Downs, *Offering*, 72.

¹²⁶⁴ Briones, *Policy*, 190.

¹²⁶⁵ Harris, *Second*, 638.

¹²⁶⁶ See §3.3.

¹²⁶⁷ See §3.3.3.

two more detailed comparisons: that of the temple tax and that of patronage, benefaction and benefit-exchange.

As we saw in chapter 3 Helena goes to Jerusalem. When she discovers the need for food, she sends for and buys grain to distribute. When her son Izates hears about the need, he sends relief to the leaders in Jerusalem. Like the Corinthians Helena and Izates have a connection with Jerusalem. Helena and Izates are connected to Jerusalem, because of their conversion to Judaism; the Corinthians are connected to Jerusalem because of their conversion to following Christ and the fact that the first believers are based in Jerusalem.

However there are a number of differences: Helena and Izates exhibit giving from individuals to a group rather than from (a) group(s) to a group and are wealthy people giving in a context of need, rather than all involved in giving. They are also an example of giving that the Corinthians are unlikely to be aware of and even if Paul is aware of them, he shows no evidence of being influenced by them or using them in his exhortation to the Corinthians.

5.7.2. *Curator Annonae*

In chapter 3 we examined the example of the *curator annonae*, where in the context of a famine, a powerful individual subsidized grain, or provided grain in return for honour. This example is similar to that in 2 Corinthians as it is in response to need, although it is not clear that it is the same kind of need. The Jerusalem believers may well have been affected by food shortages, but there are numerous other reasons which are likely to have contributed to their need.¹²⁶⁸

There are also differences between the example in 2 Corinthians and the *curator annonae* example. These are similar to the differences between the *curator annonae* example and the Acts 11 example. The *curator annonae* example is by an individual or small group rather than the whole of a community participating, and that which is given does not necessarily go to the poorest or neediest.¹²⁶⁹ The motives for giving are also somewhat different: in the *curator annonae* example, some of the motivation is probably due to the honour that those giving will gain,¹²⁷⁰ while in 2 Corinthians Paul's teaching is that the motivation should be unity and relief of need (8.14) and thankfulness to God (9.12–15). Honour and thanks in the 2 Corinthians example is due to go to God (8.16; 9.11) rather than those who give.

¹²⁶⁸ See §3.3.1.1.

¹²⁶⁹ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 91.

¹²⁷⁰ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 91, 93.

5.7.3. Temple Tax

We turn now to two examples that may be more fruitful for comparison: the temple tax and patronage.

Kreitzer and Nickle both see the temple tax as a possible example and model for the collection.¹²⁷¹ The temple tax is first referred to in Neh 10.32 and was initially one third of a shekel but later increased. It is also referred to in Matt 17.24–27. It was an annual contribution from every male from 20 years of age (Josephus *Ant.* 3.194–96).¹²⁷² Those within or close to Jerusalem brought the tax themselves, but those who lived further away contributed to chests, which were then transported to Jerusalem three times a year (*m. Shek.* 1.3).¹²⁷³

There are some similarities between the temple tax and the collection in that the temple tax goes to Jerusalem, has men appointed to travel with it (Josephus *Ant.* 18.311–13), is collected in particular central places before transportation, and care is taken about the probity of the collection and its transportation.¹²⁷⁴ Regular set aside is encouraged.¹²⁷⁵

Nickle also suggests that Pentecost is a parallel, as Pentecost was one of the times that temple tax was delivered to Jerusalem and Acts reports that Paul is keen to arrive in Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts 20.16).¹²⁷⁶ However it is not clear that Pentecost is key in the Acts passage in the same way, nor that it necessarily is specifically about the collection. Nickle posits that Silas and Judas' appointment in Acts 15.22 is to make sure that the collection is not seen as competing with the Jewish Temple tax.¹²⁷⁷ However this is based on a number of assumptions: that Acts 15 includes an agreement that the Gentile churches will send a gift to Jerusalem: that the appointment of Silas and Judas is to secure the probity of the collection rather than to communicate the result of the meeting and encourage believers (Acts 15.27); and that they return to accompany the collection having been sent back to Jerusalem in peace (Acts 15.33).

In contrast Downs argues that the only link between the two is 'Paul's metaphorical language for the collection.'¹²⁷⁸ Additionally there are a number of

¹²⁷¹ Kreitzer, *Corinthians*, 83; Nickle, *Collection*, 99.

¹²⁷² Women, slaves and minors could contribute, but not Gentiles or Samaritans (*m. Shek.* 1.4).

¹²⁷³ Nickle, *Collection*, 74.

¹²⁷⁴ Nickle, *Collection*, 87–89. *m. Shek.* 2.1 indicates that Shekels could be changed into Darics to make transportation easier.

¹²⁷⁵ Nickle, *Collection*, 87–89.

¹²⁷⁶ Nickle, *Collection*, 87.

¹²⁷⁷ Nickle, *Collection*, 62.

¹²⁷⁸ Downs, *Offering*, 10.

differences between the temple tax and the collection. As Georgi notes, Paul avoids talking about the collection as tax and does not mention the temple.¹²⁷⁹ While Paul includes language (as Downs above) that is rich in metaphors about service and worship, and presents the collection as worship, the collection is also about relieving need, which is less clearly the case with the temple tax.¹²⁸⁰ The collection is also not regulated or an obligation in the way the temple tax was,¹²⁸¹ nor is there a specific amount required of individuals (Philo *Heir* 186, 189), rather individuals contribute voluntarily as they are able.¹²⁸² While Paul allows for similar collections taking place, the collection is primarily a one off event in response to need at a specific time, rather than an annual requirement like the temple tax.¹²⁸³ Additionally, Paul makes it clear that such a collection could happen in the future in reverse (or we suspect between other communities of believers) and there is no provision for any such reversal or change within the temple tax.

5.7.4. *Patronage, Benefaction and Gift-Exchange*

We considered patronage in the Graeco-Roman world in chapter 4¹²⁸⁴ and noted the way that it is characterized by unequal but reciprocal relationships where both patrons and clients gained in different ways from the relationships. We also noted that the emperor was central in the web of patronage ties.¹²⁸⁵ In addition Downs notes the overlap of the Roman concept of patronage and the Greek concept of benefaction.¹²⁸⁶

The issues between Paul and the Corinthians with regard to Paul's refusal of their support tend to be seen as around patronage with Paul wanting to avoid being beholden to the Corinthians as a client by receiving money from them. Keener argues that the Corinthians want to be Paul's patron, but that Paul is their patron and thus only allows them to provide patronage to Jerusalem.¹²⁸⁷ Witherington suggests that the Corinthians saw themselves as patrons, so the possibility to contribute may have helped the reconciliation between them and Paul.¹²⁸⁸

¹²⁷⁹ Georgi, *Remembering*, 148.

¹²⁸⁰ Nickle, *Collection*, 90; Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:511.

¹²⁸¹ Barrett, *Second*, 240.

¹²⁸² Nickle, *Collection*, 91-92.

¹²⁸³ Thrall, *Corinthians*, 2:512.

¹²⁸⁴ See §4.2.2.

¹²⁸⁵ John K. Chow, 'Patronage in Roman Corinth,' in Richard A. Horsley, ed. *Paul and Empire*, Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997, 104-25, citing 106. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Patronage,' 81.

¹²⁸⁶ Downs, *Offering*, 88.

¹²⁸⁷ Keener, *Corinthians*, 202.

¹²⁸⁸ Witherington, *Conflict*, 413.

Briones argues against the consensus view, but for a patronage background,¹²⁸⁹ arguing that Paul would not be seen as the Corinthians' client by receiving money, but that rather by Graeco-Roman norms he would be the patron, because he is in the superior position and had the knowledge that the Corinthians would want to gain.¹²⁹⁰ Briones further argues that at the point of refusing, Paul has already given the Corinthians the knowledge of the gospel and that they want to respond as clients by providing him with money¹²⁹¹ and his refusal upsets their patron-client expectations.¹²⁹² This argument seems to rest on Paul's status as a teacher giving him a superior status.¹²⁹³ While pupils could be expected to show loyalty to teachers and critique other teachers,¹²⁹⁴ philosophers / teachers usually taught children which would suggest they had a rather different relationship with the parents of the children they were teaching, who would have been those paying them (Petronius *Satyricon* 46). Seneca allows for owing gratitude to a physician or teachers (*Ben.* 6.16.1–18.1), but this does not necessarily point to the physician or teacher being a patron. Rather Seneca is making a comparison with interaction with a trader (*Ben.* 6.14.4–15.4) and speaking of instances where what is exchanged is less tangible or goes beyond what might be expected – indeed he notes that masters and servants can owe gratitude to one another (*Ben.* 3.194–22.3). Clarke sees Paul criticising exclusive loyalty to particular leaders,¹²⁹⁵ however this would not necessarily mean that Paul and the other leaders were seen as patrons given that orators / philosophers would compete for acceptance (Aristides *Or.* 51.29) and in most situations those teaching / philosophising became clients rather than patrons (Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 77/78.34; Tacitus *Ann.* 16.32).

While discerning the exact expectations of the Corinthians of their patron-client relationship to Paul may be difficult, it seems probable that they did have patron-client expectations (and we surmise that they [or at least some of them] hoped that they would be Paul's patrons). Therefore patronage may provide a helpful comparison, particularly as McCant notes that Paul uses the language of benefaction in his description of the collection.¹²⁹⁶

¹²⁸⁹ Briones, *Policy*, 17–18.

¹²⁹⁰ Briones, *Policy*, 17–18.

¹²⁹¹ Briones, *Policy*, 160–218.

¹²⁹² Briones, *Policy*, 190–92.

¹²⁹³ Briones, *Policy*, 190.

¹²⁹⁴ Winter, *Paul*, 39.

¹²⁹⁵ Clarke, *Leadership*, 112.

¹²⁹⁶ McCant, *Corinthians*, 99.

Danker's study of benefaction language in inscriptions notes the words that are typical in such examples and highlights where these words, phrases or ideas are used in the NT.¹²⁹⁷ Second Corinthians 8 and 9 uses a number of words which were frequently used in benefaction contexts, for example σπουδή and cognates (8.16, 17, 22),¹²⁹⁸ προθυμία (8.11, 12, 19; 9.2),¹²⁹⁹ ἑαυτοὺς ἔδωκαν (8.5),¹³⁰⁰ λειτοργ- family (9.12),¹³⁰¹ πρόνοια (8.21).¹³⁰² γνώμην (8.10),¹³⁰³ and ἐπιτελέω (8.11).¹³⁰⁴ In addition to these words and ideas, Aune notes that Danker misses χάρις from his analysis¹³⁰⁵ which is used frequently in chapters 8 and 9,¹³⁰⁶ and was used of benefaction.¹³⁰⁷

We have shown that there is evidence in 2 Corinthians of possible issues around patronage and that 2 Cor 8 and 9 contain benefaction language. Therefore we will now compare Paul's language and ideas with those found in patronage, benefaction and benefit-exchange. As the main similarity or point of connection is language and descriptions of reasons, our comparison will be based in the arguments that Paul provides.

In chapter 4 we noted the key elements of patronage relationships and in this chapter we noted that patronage (from a Roman background) and benefaction (from a Greek background) have similarities and overlap. Patronage and benefaction are both forms of benefit-exchange. Benefit-exchange can take place in a friendship of equals.¹³⁰⁸ In instances where there is not parity, benefit-exchange is part of a patronage relationship.¹³⁰⁹ Benefit-exchange in both friendship and

¹²⁹⁷ Danker, *Benefactor*. Aune and Smith question how Danker picks the inscriptions that he studies and how evenly he uses them in his analysis, but both note the value of his study as a starting point for examining benefaction language (David E. Aune, 'In Search of a Profile of the "Benefactor"' (review of Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field*), *Int* 38 (1984) 421-25, citing 423; Dennis E. Smith, 'Review of Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field*, *CBQ* 46 (1984) 150-52, citing 151).

¹²⁹⁸ Danker, *Benefactor*, 320-21.

¹²⁹⁹ Danker, *Benefactor*, 321.

¹³⁰⁰ Danker, *Benefactor*, 321-22.

¹³⁰¹ Danker, *Benefactor*, 330.

¹³⁰² Danker, *Benefactor*, 360.

¹³⁰³ Danker, *Benefactor*, 362.

¹³⁰⁴ Danker, *Benefactor*, 362.

¹³⁰⁵ Aune, 'Search,' 424.

¹³⁰⁶ See §5.3.

¹³⁰⁷ Miriam Griffin, 'De Beneficiis and Roman Society,' *JRS* 93 (2003) 92-113, citing 92.

¹³⁰⁸ Clarke, *Leadership*, 32.

¹³⁰⁹ Peterman, *Paul*, 72.

patronage / benefaction forms was key for relationships and access to resources¹³¹⁰ and the relationships could be ‘flexible and dynamic’.¹³¹¹

In order to examine more thoroughly some of the expectations in benefit-exchange (both in friendship and patronage relationships), we will look briefly at Seneca’s *De Beneficiis* where Seneca is criticising forms of giving and receiving benefits in the society around him (*Ben.* 1.1.1–8). He writes specific instructions for giving and receiving gifts and also about the rationale behind the giving and receiving of gifts to correct what he sees as the issues around him (*Ben.* 1.4.3). While Seneca writes from an ideal philosophical perspective, Griffin notes similar descriptions by non-philosophers (although with a greater concern for glory than Seneca),¹³¹² and that Seneca’s descriptions fit the changing political context.¹³¹³

For Seneca it is important to choose the right recipients:¹³¹⁴ those who will show gratitude (*Ben.* 1.1.2; 1.10.4) and those who are worthy (*Ben.* 4.35.2–36.2). It is also important to give in the right way. Giving should make the recipient know that they are preferred (*Ben.* 1.14.3–4). One should not hesitate in giving (*Ben.* 1.1.8, 2.1.1–2), so that the gift is not forced out of the giver or dropped upon the receiver (*Ben.* 1.7.2–3).¹³¹⁵ The way one gives can elicit thanks,¹³¹⁶ it should not be in a hardhearted way (*Ben.* 2.7.1). That which is given should be necessary, useful or pleasurable, and should endure (*Ben.* 1.11.1). For Seneca giving in and of itself is ‘a virtuous act’ (*Ben.* 1.5.3) and therefore there is value in bestowing.¹³¹⁷ The one giving should aim to give ‘in the manner that will bring most advantage to the recipient’ (*Ben.* 2.10.2 also 4.2.4).

When a benefit is given it consists of two things the ‘beneficent act’ and the ‘object’ (*Ben.* 2.35.1) and two things should be given in return: ‘Goodwill we have repaid with goodwill; for the object we still owe an object’ (*Ben.* 2.35.1). While the

¹³¹⁰ Wallace-Hadrill, ‘Patronage,’ 74.

¹³¹¹ Wallace-Hadrill, ‘Patronage,’ 78. Joubert argues for evidence of gift-exchange in the OT (Joubert, *Paul*, 93–96), including the examples of Jacob and Esau in Gen 33, Moses and Reuel’s daughters (Ex 2.15–22), and David and Nabal in 1 Samuel 25. Whether these limited examples indicate a widespread expectation of the kind of reciprocity seen in gift-exchange in the Graeco-Roman world is less than certain, however Joubert also notes that giving frequently is related to divine reward in the OT (Joubert, *Paul*, 96) which can also be seen in the way that Paul reworks patronage and benefaction language in 2 Cor 8 and 9.

¹³¹² Griffin, ‘*Beneficiis*,’ 102–05.

¹³¹³ Griffin, ‘*Beneficiis*,’ 106.

¹³¹⁴ Peterman, *Paul*, 67.

¹³¹⁵ Peterman, *Paul*, 68.

¹³¹⁶ Joubert, *Paul*, 46.

¹³¹⁷ Joubert, *Paul*, 45.

one giving should not demand a return (*Ben.* 2.17.7) or even expect a return (*Ben.* 2.31.3–4), the one receiving a benefit should return gratitude (*Ben.* 2.35.1)¹³¹⁸ as well as in due course returning an object (*Ben.* 2.21.5–24.4).¹³¹⁹ Therefore, although ‘the one straightway forget that it was given the other should never forget that it was received’ (*Ben.* 2.10.4).

In addition Seneca mentions the idea of being stewards of wealth (*Ben.* 6.3.2), although he does not significantly develop it. He also asserts that what is given is secure as it cannot be stolen (*Ben.* 6.3.1–4).

It is important to recognize that Seneca’s *De Beneficiis* encompasses benefit-exchange as patronage as well as benefit-exchange as friendship (*Ben.* 2.28.1–29.1, as well as slave-master relationships *Ben.* 3.19.2–22.3, and father-son relationships *Ben.* 3.30.1–33.1).¹³²⁰ Seneca also seems to be writing to a particular stratum of society, for example in *Ben.* 1.9.1–4 he talks about the expectation of taking mistresses and suggests that the alternative is the accusation of affairs with maidservants. This fits Seneca’s position as a senator and *amicus principis*.¹³²¹ While benefit-exchange could occur between equals (friendship), it more often occurred in unequal relationships (patronage / benefaction).¹³²² However because Seneca critiques the practice of benefit-exchange he sees around him, *De Beneficiis* is helpful in giving a picture of what ideal benefit-exchange might look like and we can therefore use it as we compare Paul’s use of benefaction language with the practice and ideas about patronage, benefaction and benefit-exchange in Graeco-Roman society.

We have already noted similarities in language between that used by Paul in 2 Cor 8 and 9 and that used in benefaction inscriptions.

There are also some similarities between 2 Cor 8 and 9 and Seneca’s teaching on benefits. Seneca makes it clear that one should not give in order to receive (even though on receiving one should give). Paul similarly exhorts the Corinthians to give following the example of the Macedonians and Jesus, who give generously and without return, and yet Paul also provides for the possibility of return and includes elements of reciprocity.

¹³¹⁸ Peterman, 69.

¹³¹⁹ Return of the object should not be straightaway (*Ben.* 4.40.4).

¹³²⁰ Joubert, 37–48.

¹³²¹ Griffin, ‘*Beneficiis*,’ 93.

¹³²² Joubert 21.

For Seneca benefit giving was not meant to place the giver in need and Paul notes his desire that the Corinthians should not be in need. However Paul does also provide the examples of the Macedonians and Jesus who give beyond this point.

Seneca asserts that benefits (and returns) should be fitting to what is needed by the one receiving and Paul argues that the collection will supply what is needed in Jerusalem. However we have noted that the level of need Seneca and Paul are talking about is probably different. Seneca encourages his readers to give to someone what they need or want, while Paul encourages the Corinthians to give to those in need.

While there are similarities in language and in some of the provisions of giving, Paul also subverts ideas of patronage. McCant argues that Paul subverts the benefaction / patron-client expectations, by bringing God into the equation as the supreme benefactor,¹³²³ so that God is thanked rather than the Corinthians for their gift,¹³²⁴ making it a three-way relationship.¹³²⁵ As Downs points out

This rhetorical strategy subtly subverts the dominant ideology of pagan benefaction by highlighting the honor, praise, and thanksgiving due God, the one from whom all benefactions ultimately originate, thus also minimizing any competition for honor, praise, and thanksgiving among the Corinthians.¹³²⁶

In addition, Griffith argues that the reciprocity envisaged by Paul would not necessarily return to the original giver but could be given to another person.¹³²⁷

While Paul does not specifically say this, it is plausible given his concern for responding to need and the number of congregations involved in the collection. Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians is based upon the centrality of God and his provision: for them, for them to give, and probably also the desire to give. It is part of the believer's wider receiving of χάρις and giving out of that. In contrast Seneca asserts benefits should be given in order to be virtuous, leading Griffith to conclude that the benefits were given to be righteous rather than out of the righteousness provided by God.¹³²⁸

¹³²³ Griffith, 'Abounding,' 72.

¹³²⁴ McCant, *Corinthians*, 96-99; Griffith, 'Abounding,' 242.

¹³²⁵ Joubert, *Paul*, 201.

¹³²⁶ Downs, *Offering*, 143-44. It is possible that Paul's description of the brothers as the 'glory of Christ' encourages the Corinthians to focus on the glory of Christ rather than their own glory (or that of an earthly patron / benefactor) (Harrison, 'Brothers,' 185).

¹³²⁷ Griffith, 'Abounding,' 242.

¹³²⁸ Griffith, 'Abounding,' 249.

The collection is also different from patron–client relationships in that its aim is equality and relief of need. While we have noted Seneca’s teaching that those giving benefits should look for what the recipient needs or wants, it is not a targeted giving to those in need. In contrast Welborn argues that Paul presents an argument for equality through redistribution which includes ‘the equalization of resources between persons of *different* social classes through voluntary redistribution.’¹³²⁹ The collection is not free from benefits for the givers, indeed Paul enumerates some of them, however these benefits are rather different from those usually associated with giving and Lim argues that the collection is not about self-benefit, but rather about other-benefit.¹³³⁰

Downs also suggests that associations may provide another possible comparison and suggests that associations could have trans-local links where help was provided. He notes examples of help to a home city, the supply of Egyptian priests to the cults of Isis and Sarapis, accommodation while travelling and mutual assistance.¹³³¹ However Downs acknowledges the paucity of evidence.¹³³² The example he does give is *CIG* 5853 where an association provides assistance in paying fees, so while it is from one related group to another it is not for those in need and is annual.¹³³³ While there may be examples of similar ‘sharing at a distance’ with associations, we do not currently have sufficient evidence of such examples to make a comparison. Longenecker notes that there could be care for those who were poor within associations.¹³³⁴ However these examples tend to be in one location rather than care / giving / sharing over a distance.

5.8. Conclusion

The example of sharing ‘at a distance’ seen in the collection in 2 Cor 8 and 9 is one where giving / sharing: is core to being a Christian; is rooted in grace, in Jesus and his example; provides for need; is voluntary, generous and practical; involves all; is in relation to what one has; is relational and has potential reciprocity. It is also an example where probity is important and God is central as the ultimate benefactor.

¹³²⁹ L. L. Welborn, ‘That There May be Equality’: The Contexts and Consequences of a Pauline Ideal,’ *NTS* 59 (2013) 73–90, citing 89.

¹³³⁰ Lim, ‘Generosity,’ 27.

¹³³¹ Downs, *Offering*, 112–15.

¹³³² Downs, *Offering*, 113.

¹³³³ Downs, *Offering*, 114–15.

¹³³⁴ Longenecker, *Remembering*, 69.

It is an example that is similar to the sharing at a distance in Acts 11.19-30, but involves multiple locations and communities contributing to the giving and less evidence of a deep ongoing relationship. Acts and 2 Corinthians are also different forms of writing and therefore focus on different aspects of the examples.

As the collection is relatively similar to Acts 11.19-30, its similarities to and differences from the *curator annonae* example and the account of Helena and Izates are much the same. However the collection is also distinct from the examples of Helena and Izates and the *curator annonae* as it is from multiple locations and communities to one community.

The collection is similar to the temple tax in that it is directed to Jerusalem, is transported carefully with concern about the probity of the collection and is part of worship. However, the collection is different from the temple tax in that it is voluntary, not regulated, involves giving as one is able rather than a specified amount, is one off rather than an annual due, could happen in other directions, and is a response to need rather than for the temple.

When Paul writes about the collection, he uses language and ideas that relate to patronage and benefaction in his argument and patronage appears to be behind some of the issues for the Corinthian congregation. There are some similarities in ideas: not giving in order to receive, yet an expectation of receiving; not becoming in need through giving; and giving what is needed. However there are differences. Paul subverts patronage. He shows God, rather than the giver, being thanked and honoured. He provides the examples of Jesus and the Macedonians giving sacrificially. Paul also argues that the aim is equality where none are in need – communities give in times of plenty and receive in times of need. The benefits Paul lists of giving and sharing are also quite different from those usually associated with giving.

6. First and Second Thessalonians: Limits on Sharing

6.1. Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to share food together – an example of sharing within a community. In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul encourages the Corinthians to contribute to the collection for those in need in Jerusalem and Judaea – an example of sharing between communities. We now turn to look at 1 and 2 Thessalonians where Paul places boundaries on the sharing within a community, while at the same time praising them for their love for one another.¹³³⁵ This example contributes to the thesis in providing an example where limitations are placed on sharing, but where sharing is still encouraged.

This chapter first considers the background of Thessalonica and the situation of the church to which Paul writes. It then looks at 1 Thessalonians, particularly 1 Thessalonians 4.9–12 and 5.14–15, which talk about love and work, and the need to admonish the ἀτάκτοι, before considering more briefly other passages which may contribute to understanding the situation that Paul is addressing. The chapter then examines 2 Thessalonians. After discussing whether the epistle is Pauline and the occasion of the letter, it considers 2 Thessalonians 3.6–15, which addresses the issue of the ἀτάκτοι and work in greater depth.

Having considered 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the chapter looks at the possible backgrounds to the issues behind the ἀτάκτοι. It provides an overview of the example of sharing (and its limits) that Paul provides in 1 and 2 Thessalonians before comparing it to Epicurean practice, family life, voluntary associations and patronage practices to ascertain how these compare to the example Paul promotes.

6.2. Thessalonica

6.2.1. *The City*

Thessalonica was founded by Alexander's general in 316/315 BCE,¹³³⁶ had Roman influence from 197 BCE,¹³³⁷ was made capital of Macedonia in 148 BCE, and

¹³³⁵ The authorship of 2 Thessalonians will be considered later in the chapter.

¹³³⁶ Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, New York: Doubleday, 2000, 14; Robert Jewett, *The Thessalonian Correspondence. Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, 123.

¹³³⁷ Edward Pillar, *Resurrection as Anti-Imperial Gospel. 1 Thessalonians 1:9b–10 in Context*,

became a free city in 42 BCE.¹³³⁸ Macedonia was made an imperial province by Tiberius in 15 CE and a senatorial province in 44 CE.¹³³⁹ Thessalonica was on the *Via Egnatia*¹³⁴⁰ and was a port city.¹³⁴¹ It was militarily important.¹³⁴² Rulmu notes that the city had swapped sides a number of times, for example, supporting Brutus and Cassius, then Antony and Octavian, then Antony, then Octavian.¹³⁴³

The city had a temple of Caesar (*IG[X] II/I 31*)¹³⁴⁴ and a statue of Augustus.¹³⁴⁵ There is evidence of coins with images of Augustus instead of Zeus and that Roma / Roman benefactors were seen as gods.¹³⁴⁶ Pillar also notes close connections between emperors and deities, the way that emperors were involved in promoting particular gods, and the identification of individual emperors with deities; for example Caligula claimed divinity in his lifetime.¹³⁴⁷ This may have been an easy transition for the Thessalonians as the Macedonian king had been seen as divine.¹³⁴⁸

The imperial cult was not the sole religious presence. Rulmu points to the worship of Egyptian gods¹³⁴⁹ and Donfried to the presence of the Cabirus cult.¹³⁵⁰ Jewett describes Cabirus as ‘a martyred hero, murdered by his brothers, buried with symbols of royal power, and expected to return to help lonely individuals and the city of Thessalonica in particular.’¹³⁵¹ However the cult varied from place to place and therefore comparisons are difficult.¹³⁵² It was absorbed into the imperial cult

Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013, 2.

¹³³⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009, 5.

¹³³⁹ Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006, 6.

¹³⁴⁰ Leon Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Leicester: IVP, 1984, 17.

¹³⁴¹ Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 2.

¹³⁴² Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 2; Néstor O. Míguez, *The Practice of Hope. Ideology and Intention in 1 Thessalonians*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012, 51.

¹³⁴³ Callia Rulmu, ‘Between Ambition and Quietism: the Socio-Political Background of 1 Thessalonians 4,9-12,’ *Biblica* 91 (2010) 393-417, citing 396-97.

¹³⁴⁴ James R. Harrison, ‘Paul and the Imperial Gospel at Thessaloniki,’ *JSNT* 25 (2002) 71-96, citing 81.

¹³⁴⁵ Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 5.

¹³⁴⁶ Karl Paul Donfried, ‘The Imperial Cults of Thessalonica and Political Conflict in 1 Thessalonians,’ in Richard A. Horsley, ed. *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, Valley Forge PA: Trinity International, 1997, 215-23, citing 218.

¹³⁴⁷ Pillar, *Resurrection*, 83-103.

¹³⁴⁸ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 126.

¹³⁴⁹ Rulmu, ‘Ambition,’ 405.

¹³⁵⁰ Karl Paul Donfried, *Paul, Thessalonica and Early Christianity*, London: T&T Clark, 2002, 25-26.

¹³⁵¹ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 128.

¹³⁵² Jewett, *Correspondence*, 127.

during the reign of Augustus.¹³⁵³ Jewett suggests this may have led to the lower classes losing an important connection and source of hope.¹³⁵⁴

Religious activity and honour were also part of voluntary associations (VAs). VAs could be focused round a particular god¹³⁵⁵ or person and were used by patrons looking for honour,¹³⁵⁶ as those financing and serving in leadership roles in a VA were honoured (*IG II*² 1343).¹³⁵⁷ VAs were viewed with suspicion as potential sources of political unrest and subversion and a number of decrees were passed to limit them.¹³⁵⁸ While these decrees generally focused on Rome, Rulmu suggests that the Roman administrators probably took a level of suspicion with them.¹³⁵⁹ This can be seen in the letter exchange between Pliny and Trajan where the emperor argues against forming a guild of firemen because ‘men who are banded together for a common end will all the same be a political association before long’ (*Ep. Tra.* 33, 34).

6.2.2. *The Church*

Acts 17.1–15 recounts the beginnings of the church in Thessalonica. As well as more general questions about the historicity of Acts, which we have addressed earlier,¹³⁶⁰ there are two particular questions about this account: first the short time that Paul appears to stay in the city and secondly the situation with Jason – why is it Jason and not Paul taken before the city officials (17.6) and what are the decrees of Caesar (17.7) that they are meant to have defied?

Acts 17.1–2 indicates that Paul and his companions went to a Jewish synagogue and spent three Sabbaths reasoning with those there. While there is no evidence of a Greek synagogue or Jewish inscriptions¹³⁶¹ it seems likely, due to the dispersal of the Jews and the evidence of a Samaritan synagogue in Thessalonica from the third century BCE,¹³⁶² that there were Jews with a synagogue when Paul visited.

¹³⁵³ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 131.

¹³⁵⁴ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 131.

¹³⁵⁵ R. S. Ascough, ‘Redescribing the Thessalonian “Mission” in the Light of Graeco-Roman Associations,’ *NTS* 60 (2014) 61–82, citing 67.

¹³⁵⁶ Rulmu, ‘Ambition,’ 398.

¹³⁵⁷ <http://philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/honors-by-the-soteriasts-for-their-founder-37-35-bce/> accessed 14-08-14.

¹³⁵⁸ Rulmu, ‘Ambition,’ 399–400.

¹³⁵⁹ Rulmu, ‘Ambition,’ 401.

¹³⁶⁰ See §3.2.1.

¹³⁶¹ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 119.

¹³⁶² Jewett, *Correspondence*, 120.

While three Sabbaths is a short time for Paul to spend in a town, this might just be the initial period.¹³⁶³ Paul may have followed his habit elsewhere of going first to the synagogue and then have spoken in Gentile contexts and Luke may have compressed the account.¹³⁶⁴

There are a number of options for the decrees that they are accused of contravening (Acts 17.7). First, the accusation could have been around Paul 'proclaiming another king'¹³⁶⁵ which would have been seen as being treasonous. However as Hardin points out, if this were the case we might expect a more severe response from the authorities.¹³⁶⁶ Secondly, the problem could be around ruler changes and oaths of loyalty¹³⁶⁷ as there were decrees against predicting a change of ruler. However these were really focused against politicians trying to raise themselves to positions of power and were generally restricted to Italy.¹³⁶⁸ Thirdly, it is possible that the decrees could involve the oaths of allegiance,¹³⁶⁹ but again defying these would usually have fallen under the treason law and elicited a stronger response.¹³⁷⁰ Hardin proposes a fourth possibility: that the decrees involved are around the regulation of VAs.¹³⁷¹ From the mid first century BCE there were increasing restrictions on VAs and Augustus banned all political clubs.¹³⁷² While these regulations were generally focused in Rome there is evidence that they were spreading.¹³⁷³ This can be seen in the *Lex Iritania* (Spain) which 'stated that all gatherings, groups and voluntary associations (*collegia*) were forbidden to meet, with the penalty for doing so being a monetary fine to the municipal authorities.'¹³⁷⁴ Hardin suggests that the issue at hand is an unauthorised gathering and that the politarchs are concerned to avoid any report reaching the proconsul and from there Rome.¹³⁷⁵ Therefore the politarchs act to deal with the situation and take money from Jason (and potentially the group) as bond money.

¹³⁶³ Steve Walton, *Leadership and Lifestyle. The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1 Thessalonians*, Cambridge: CUP, 2000, 146.

¹³⁶⁴ Malherbe, *Letter*, 59–60.

¹³⁶⁵ Justin K. Hardin, 'Decrees and Drachmas at Thessalonica: An Illegal Assembly in Jason's House (Acts 17.1–10a),' *NTS* 52 (2006) 29–49, citing 31.

¹³⁶⁶ Hardin, 'Decrees,' 33.

¹³⁶⁷ Donfried, 'Cults,' 215; Hardin, 'Decrees,' 33.

¹³⁶⁸ Hardin, 'Decrees,' 35.

¹³⁶⁹ Donfried, 'Cults,' 216; Hardin, 'Decrees,' 33.

¹³⁷⁰ Hardin, 'Decrees,' 36.

¹³⁷¹ Hardin, 'Decrees,' 39–40.

¹³⁷² Hardin, 'Decrees,' 40.

¹³⁷³ Hardin, 'Decrees,' 40.

¹³⁷⁴ Hardin, 'Decrees,' 46.

¹³⁷⁵ Hardin, 'Decrees,' 43–45.

Hardin's proposal might explain why Paul is not the primary focus as it was Jason's house that the group are meeting in. Jewett adds the possibility that Paul may have left before this point.¹³⁷⁶

While 1 Thessalonians portrays the Thessalonians as suffering persecution and hardship (see below), it says little about their social standing. Acts 17.4 indicates that the initial believers were potentially a mixed group including some prominent women.¹³⁷⁷ In contrast Ascough argues that the congregation were predominantly male due to the lack of reference to women or children and the way that 1 Thess 4.4–6 is addressed only to men,¹³⁷⁸ however Galatians does not refer to women or children within the congregation either. In 2 Cor 8.2 Paul talks about the churches in Macedonia as experiencing extreme poverty. Míguez argues that the presence of the plural indicates the inclusion of the Thessalonians in this group,¹³⁷⁹ and that the fact that 1 Thess 5.27 indicates that the letter is to be read *πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς* supports this.¹³⁸⁰ However while reading and writing were specialised skills and few people would have been able to read or write fluently,¹³⁸¹ literacy did not always equate to affluence, as slaves could be literate for reading and writing on behalf of their masters. In addition this public reading of the letter may simply indicate the communal nature of the way the early church met.

It seems likely that, as with the Corinthians,¹³⁸² the Thessalonian church did include some people of higher social class,¹³⁸³ but 1 Thessalonians and 2 Cor 8.2 suggest that the church as a whole was not affluent and may have had fewer people of higher social status than some of the other churches. Indeed Ascough goes as far as to argue that there was no patron as Paul chose to work,¹³⁸⁴ but this does not necessarily follow, given that there are those in Corinth who are keen to be Paul's patron and Paul is still concerned not to be a burden and to work (1 Cor 9.6, 13; 2 Cor 11.7–9; 12.14–16). Ascough additionally argues that Paul's reference to manual

¹³⁷⁶ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 117.

¹³⁷⁷ Winter points to Aristarchus who is mentioned in Acts 19.29 and 20.4 who could be the Aristarchus son of Aristarchus 'who heads up a list of politarchs in that city' (Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994, 46).

¹³⁷⁸ R. S. Ascough, 'The Thessalonian Christian Community as a Professional Voluntary Association,' *JBL* 119 (2000) 311–28, citing 325–26.

¹³⁷⁹ Míguez, *Practice*, 61.

¹³⁸⁰ Míguez, *Practice*, 70.

¹³⁸¹ Chris Keith, "In My Own Hand": Grapho-Literacy and the Apostle Paul,' *Biblica* 89 (2008) 39–58, citing 46.

¹³⁸² See §4.3.

¹³⁸³ Morris, *Thessalonians*, 18.

¹³⁸⁴ R. S. Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003, 166.

work (2.7–9; 4.1, 11) would dishonour the Thessalonians if they were not labourers.¹³⁸⁵ However Paul may have been affirming those who were manual workers as well encouraging others who thought manual work beneath them to take it up. Even if there were some people with a bit more money or status, persecution may have affected their position. As Schnabel points out, work-related metaphors do not prove that the Thessalonians were all manual labourers.¹³⁸⁶ Thus Russell argues that the Thessalonian church had some higher status people and the others were clients, freedmen and slaves.¹³⁸⁷ Given the evidence here and the evidence discussed in chapter 4,¹³⁸⁸ this seems a reasonable assumption.

The accounts in Acts (17.5–9) and 1 Thessalonians (1.6; 2.14; 3.1–5) both indicate that the Thessalonians endured persecution and suffering. Ascough argues that this opposition may have arisen because of the way the Thessalonians declared the honour of their new-found faith,¹³⁸⁹ undermining the focus on the imperial cult. Pillar analyses 1 Thess 1.9b–10 and identifies a number of ways that Paul's use of language would have had anti-imperial resonances, including his appropriating of imperial cult language, for example his use of ἀναμείναι (1.10).¹³⁹⁰ Pillar sees the Thessalonians turning from idols as a 'decisive rejection of things imperial'.¹³⁹¹ He may be overstating the case, but he does show evidence of the ways in which the Thessalonians' following of Jesus could have been seen as anti-imperial. Persecution could be related to the focus on eschatology¹³⁹² and Paul's responses do use words that would have been used politically about the empire (1 Thess 2.12, 18; 5.3).¹³⁹³ Persecution could also have led to the questions about those who died before Jesus' return (1 Thess 4.13–18).¹³⁹⁴ While Barclay argues that it is unlikely

¹³⁸⁵ Ascough, 'Community,' 315.

¹³⁸⁶ Eckhard Schnabel, 'Review of *Paul's Macedonian Associations: the Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians*,' *TJ* 26 (2005) 334–37, citing 336. Also Oakes notes that Ascough does not investigate counter arguments to his assertion (Peter Oakes, 'Review of *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians*,' *JSNT* 28 (2006) 376–78, citing 378).

¹³⁸⁷ Ronald Russell, 'The Idle in 2 Thess 3.6–12: Eschatological or a Social Problem?,' *NTS* 34 (1988) 105–119, citing 110–11.

¹³⁸⁸ See §4.3.

¹³⁸⁹ Ascough, 'Mission,' 81.

¹³⁹⁰ Pillar, *Resurrection*, 185–192.

¹³⁹¹ Pillar, *Resurrection*, 256.

¹³⁹² J. M. G. Barclay, 'Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity,' *JSNT* 47 (1992) 49–74.

¹³⁹³ Donfried, 'Cults,' 216, 219.

¹³⁹⁴ J. M. G. Barclay, 'Conflict in Thessalonica,' *CBQ* 55 (1993) 512–30, citing 512–14.

that the deaths were directly related to the persecution that they endured,¹³⁹⁵ he does suggest that outsiders may have linked the deaths to their abandonment of traditional Graeco-Roman religion.¹³⁹⁶

6.3. First Thessalonians¹³⁹⁷

6.3.1. Introduction

Paul writes 1 Thessalonians just after Timothy has returned (3.7–8) with good news from the visit to the Thessalonians that Paul sent him on to encourage and strengthen them (3.1–2). It is probable that Paul writes from Corinth (Acts 18.5).¹³⁹⁸ Paul's affection for the Thessalonians is clear in the letter (for example 2.7b–8, 17; 3.12). This affection can be seen in the long thanksgiving section,¹³⁹⁹ and in the range of affective images that Paul uses as he speaks of being gentle (2.7), orphaned (2.17) and a caring father (2.11–12).¹⁴⁰⁰ While Richard raises questions about the unity of 1 Thessalonians,¹⁴⁰¹ the strong consensus is for a unified letter written by Paul.¹⁴⁰² For, while there are some differences in tone (between 2.13–14, where Richard sees Paul expressing relief after anxiety and 1.2–3; 4.3–4, where he is confident in his preaching and addresses issues), these are natural if Paul is writing after both anxiety and reassurance.¹⁴⁰³ Also, while Paul does note that reports about the Thessalonians' faith have reached other areas, these note how they received Paul and his message initially (1.6–10). Therefore it is not necessary to presume a later date.¹⁴⁰⁴

Paul writes to encourage and teach the Thessalonians in the midst of θλίψις (1.6). Barclay argues that the parallels with Jesus and Paul (1.6) suggest not simply a mental distress but more substantial persecution.¹⁴⁰⁵ DeSilva argues that part of

¹³⁹⁵ Barclay, 'Conflict,' 514.

¹³⁹⁶ Barclay, 'Conflict,' 516.

¹³⁹⁷ Scripture references in this section will be to 1 Thessalonians unless noted otherwise.

¹³⁹⁸ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 179.

¹³⁹⁹ While different scholars see this section ending in different places it is long in each of the options (Jewett, *Correspondence*, 63, 69).

¹⁴⁰⁰ Abraham J. Malherbe, 'Ethics in their Context: the Thessalonians and their Neighbors,' *ResQ* 54 (2012) 201–18, citing 206.

¹⁴⁰¹ Earl J. Richards, *First and Second Thessalonians*, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2007, 11.

¹⁴⁰² Malherbe provides a helpful summary of the various theories, noting the most common alternative to unity is 2.13–16 being an interpolation (Malherbe, *Letter*, 79–81). Also Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, 29–37.

¹⁴⁰³ David A. deSilva, "'Worthy of his Kingdom': Honor Discourse and Social Engineering in 1 Thessalonians,' *JSNT* 64 (1996) 49–79, citing 76.

¹⁴⁰⁴ deSilva, 'Worthy,' 77.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Barclay, 'Thessalonica,' 53.

Paul's aim is to encourage the Thessalonians to find their 'honor and security before God and the supra-local Christian community',¹⁴⁰⁶ particularly where persecution was aimed at correcting the Thessalonians' behaviour.¹⁴⁰⁷

Paul addresses questions that presumably have been sent in some form by the Thessalonians or situations that Timothy has highlighted from his visit. These include questions about eschatology and those believers who die before Jesus' return (4.13-18). Paul reinforces his previous eschatological teaching (5.1-2),¹⁴⁰⁸ preparing the Thessalonians for the parousia, while speaking against an over-realised eschatology.¹⁴⁰⁹

6.3.2. *First Thessalonians 4.9-12*

These verses are part of a section on living to please God, with 4.1-8 focusing on purity and holiness and 4.9-12 on brotherly love and work. Paul introduces the section with *περὶ δέ* (4.9). Frame argues this means that Paul is responding to a letter sent by the Thessalonians,¹⁴¹⁰ while others see it as introducing a new topic.¹⁴¹¹ Walton acknowledges that *περὶ δέ* could indicate a reply to a letter. The places where Paul uses it in 1 Thessalonians are abrupt transitions unless Paul is responding to a letter (4.9, 13; 5.1) and it would fit with epistolary convention.¹⁴¹² However Walton notes that *περὶ δέ* does not necessarily indicate that Paul is responding to a letter.¹⁴¹³ Also, as Malherbe points out, Paul does not refer to a letter.¹⁴¹⁴ Paul could be replying to a verbal report,¹⁴¹⁵ which Wanamaker suggests is from Timothy.¹⁴¹⁶ While there may be parallels with epistolary convention, this does not imply that Paul always followed such conventions.¹⁴¹⁷

¹⁴⁰⁶ deSilva, 'Worthy,' 50.

¹⁴⁰⁷ deSilva, 'Worthy,' 55.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Barclay, 'Thessalonica,' 51.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 97-98.

¹⁴¹⁰ James Everett Frame, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912, 157.

¹⁴¹¹ Göran Agrell, *Work, Toil and Sustenance*, Verbum: Håkan Ohlssons, 1976, 95; Helmut Koester, 'Imperial Ideology and Paul's Eschatology in 1 Thessalonians,' in Richard A. Horsley, ed. *Paul and Empire. Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, Harrisburg: Trinity International, 1997, 158-66161; Ernest Best, *The First and Second Letter to the Thessalonians*, London: Blacks, n.d., 171.

¹⁴¹² Walton, *Leadership*, 148.

¹⁴¹³ Walton, *Leadership*, 149.

¹⁴¹⁴ Malherbe, *Letter*, 77. Malherbe therefore allows for the source to be a verbal report or a letter (252).

¹⁴¹⁵ Walton, *Leadership*, 149.

¹⁴¹⁶ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 159, Also Malherbe, *Letter*, 77-78.

¹⁴¹⁷ Walton, *Leadership*, 149.

Paul starts the section by praising the Thessalonians for their love before responding to the issues.¹⁴¹⁸ Paul speaks of their love as φιλαδελφία (4.9) which is used elsewhere of blood siblings¹⁴¹⁹ (Plutarch *Mor.* 478a–492D, 4 Macc 13.21,23, 26). Wanamaker asserts that the only example of it referring to love outside the family in Greek and Jewish literature is 2 Macc 15.14.¹⁴²⁰ However Harland points to a figurative use in *IG XIV* 902a in Latium.¹⁴²¹ Even if we accept this example, Paul uses a word which prompts his readers to think in terms of family rather than friendship,¹⁴²² which may be particularly important if their new-found faith had caused issues within their blood family relationships.¹⁴²³ Horrell also notes from his survey of Pauline letters that Paul often uses ἀδελφοί to encourage believers to show ‘solidarity and mutual care’.¹⁴²⁴

They are θεοδίδακτοί (4.9). While this has possible links to Isa 54.13 and Jer 31.33–34,¹⁴²⁵ Gaventa points out that the LXX of Isa 54.13 uses a different word¹⁴²⁶ and Wanamaker argues that the word is not known prior to Paul.¹⁴²⁷ It may be that Paul uses the word in contrast to the Epicurean idea of being ‘self-taught’ / ἀδιδάκτως (Sextus Empiricus *Math.* 11.96). Paddison sees the teaching as being by the indwelling Holy Spirit¹⁴²⁸ with Turner arguing that it is part of ongoing sanctification.¹⁴²⁹

The Thessalonians have shown this love throughout Macedonia (4.10). Wanamaker and Neil suggest that they have done so through their hospitality.¹⁴³⁰ Witherington adds that they may have sent aid to other cities.¹⁴³¹ While there is no

¹⁴¹⁸ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 157; B. Rigaux, *Saint Paul: Les Épitres aux Thessaloniciens*, Paris: Lecoffre, 1956, 516.

¹⁴¹⁹ BDAG, 1055.

¹⁴²⁰ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 160.

¹⁴²¹ <http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/main?url=bib>, accessed 26/08/2014. Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians. Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities*, New York/ London: T&T Clark, 2009, 70.

¹⁴²² Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 119. Burke notes that Paul uses a range of ‘kinship terminology’ (Trevor J. Burke, ‘Paul’s New Family in Thessalonica,’ *NovT* 54 (2012) 269–87, citing 270).

¹⁴²³ Richards, *Thessalonians*, 214.

¹⁴²⁴ David G. Horrell, ‘From ἀδελφοί to οἶκος θεοῦ: Social Transformation in Pauline Christianity,’ *JBL* 120 (2001) 293–311, citing 309, also 302.

¹⁴²⁵ David J. Williams, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992, 76.

¹⁴²⁶ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, Louisville: John Knox, 1998, 57.

¹⁴²⁷ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 160.

¹⁴²⁸ Angus Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics and 1 Thessalonians*, Cambridge: CUP, 2005, 172.

¹⁴²⁹ Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts Then and Now*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996, 104.

¹⁴³⁰ William Neil, *Thessalonians*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1950, 86; Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 160.

¹⁴³¹ Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 120.

clear evidence for this, the churches of Macedonia are those who are quick to contribute to the gift to Jerusalem (2 Cor 8.1–6), which may indicate that they were already in the practice of sending aid elsewhere. It is possible that such hospitality and help was more necessary in a situation of persecution.¹⁴³²

Paul links their love for one another to work using καί (4.10). Agrell acknowledges that there is some connection to the previous verses but argues that the καί indicates that Paul sees this as a new topic.¹⁴³³ However, earlier in his book Agrell sees these verses as showing love as a motive for work.¹⁴³⁴ Malherbe argues that the καί is explicative.¹⁴³⁵ Bruce and Milligan see it as adverbial, translating it ‘indeed’.¹⁴³⁶ Either of these later options seems more likely than reading it as ‘and’ as it introduces four infinitives that are dependent on παρακαλοῦμεν (4.10) from the previous verse.¹⁴³⁷ Paul has already made a link between love and work in his own life in 1 Thess 2.8–9. Therefore Best’s conclusion that work is a specific application of φιλαδελφία seems sensible.¹⁴³⁸ Thus the aspiring to live quietly, minding their own things and working with their own hands are all part of their love for one another.

Paul exhorts the Thessalonians φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν (4.11). Φιλοτιμέομαι is generally used of political ambition (Philo *Rewards* 11)¹⁴³⁹ and seeking honour.¹⁴⁴⁰ BDAG translates it ‘consider it an honor, aspire’.¹⁴⁴¹ Winter notes that it is used of benefactors.¹⁴⁴² ἡσυχάζειν is used elsewhere in the NT of resting on the Sabbath (Luke 23.56), being silent (Luke 14.4, Acts 11.18) and having an undisturbed/ quiet life (1 Tim 2.2).¹⁴⁴³ Thus the phrase is somewhat of an oxymoron,¹⁴⁴⁴ with Williams suggesting ‘to seek restlessly to be quiet’.¹⁴⁴⁵

¹⁴³² Barclay, ‘Thessalonica,’ 54.

¹⁴³³ Agrell, *Work*, 96.

¹⁴³⁴ Agrell, *Work*, 3.

¹⁴³⁵ Malherbe, *Letter*, 246.

¹⁴³⁶ F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Waco: Word, 1982, 90; G. Milligan, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians*, London: MacMillan, 1908, 53.

¹⁴³⁷ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 162. Also Ivor H. Jones, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Peterborough: Epworth, 2005, 57 (though he argues for five infinitives).

¹⁴³⁸ Best, *Thessalonians*, 171.

¹⁴³⁹ Malherbe, *Letter*, 246.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Rigaux, *Paul*, 520.

¹⁴⁴¹ BDAG, 1059.

¹⁴⁴² Winter, *Welfare*, 48.

¹⁴⁴³ Agrell, *Work*, 98; A. L. Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, London: Nelson, 1969, 66.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Malherbe, *Letter*, 247.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Williams, *Thessalonians*, 77.

Barclay helpfully points out that this cannot simply refer to an issue that is just about working because if individuals were not working, they would be quiet.¹⁴⁴⁶ There are possible parallels with philosophical teaching about withdrawal from political life.¹⁴⁴⁷ There are various suggestions about the background to this exhortation which include: Paul discouraging particularly aggressive evangelism,¹⁴⁴⁸ Paul arguing the Thessalonians should not be noisy on behalf of their patrons and dependent on them,¹⁴⁴⁹ the Thessalonians thinking that the new age meant they had freedom to do what they wanted,¹⁴⁵⁰ and Míguez's suggestion, which seems less plausible, that Paul is addressing the hardworking about how to use their time off.¹⁴⁵¹ The first three of these possibilities will be explored further later.¹⁴⁵²

Paul then says they should πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια. This may be linked to the Stoic ideal of independence.¹⁴⁵³ This could simply be a call to concern themselves with their private life or own affairs,¹⁴⁵⁴ but the phrase is also used to contrast with being a busybody (Plato *Resp.* 433AB), could include the idea of oversight of others if it is their proper concern (Arrian *Epict. diss.* 3.22.97), and was used in the sense of own affairs appropriate to a person's function (Plato *Resp.* 4.441DE). Winter and Walton argue that Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians is that they should not be running around after their patron's affairs.¹⁴⁵⁵ Thus πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια is then 'the opposite to being concerned about the public activities of one's patron'.¹⁴⁵⁶ This fits with the idea that being a client was an inappropriate role for a Christian.

Agrell asserts that Paul's use of ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς χερσὶν ὑμῶν (4.11) refers to manual work and notes that Paul uses it elsewhere only of his own work (1 Cor 4.12; 1 Thess 2.9). Therefore Agrell argues this indicates that the Thessalonians were mainly lower class.¹⁴⁵⁷ However the phrase τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν is common in the OT (Deut 2.7, Job 1.10; Ps 89.17) and therefore the phrase does not need to be limited to just manual labour.¹⁴⁵⁸

¹⁴⁴⁶ Barclay, 'Conflict,' 521.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, 58; Rigaux, *Paul*, 521.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Barclay, 'Conflict,' 524.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 112.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, 59.

¹⁴⁵¹ Míguez, *Practice*, 69.

¹⁴⁵² See §6.5.1, §6.5.3, §6.5.7.

¹⁴⁵³ Best, *Thessalonians*, 178; Winter, *Welfare*, 50.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Agrell, *Work*, 98.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Winter, *Welfare*, 48-49; Walton, *Leadership*, 170.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Winter, *Welfare*, 49.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Agrell, *Work*, 99.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Richards, *Thessalonians*, 220.

Paul's concern that they live quietly and work is not simply about love, it is also about right relationships with those outside the community (4.12), which is probably about how they appear and their consequent witness.¹⁴⁵⁹ This would be particularly important in a situation where they have been perceived as being trouble makers (Acts 17.1-9),¹⁴⁶⁰ have faced hostility, and may have a lack of opportunities to socialize if many of the opportunities involve worship of other gods.¹⁴⁶¹ Thus how they lived and worked could counter accusations and rumours.¹⁴⁶² Those outsiders who may have been former patrons of Christians may have been struck by the believers' new found focus on work.¹⁴⁶³

This right relationship with those outside involves μηδενὸς χρείων ἔχητε (4.12). This could either mean to lack nothing or to depend on no one.¹⁴⁶⁴ However χρεία usually takes a thing rather than a person as its object¹⁴⁶⁵ which would point to the sense being lacking nothing, rather than independence from any other person. This would also fit with Paul's example of himself sharing his soul with the Thessalonians. Jewett provides the interesting possibility that this lacking nothing need not be an individual attribute but could be a collective one.¹⁴⁶⁶ Aasgaard similarly argues the plural verb indicates group self-sufficiency.¹⁴⁶⁷

6.3.3. *First Thessalonians 5.14-15*

The other passage in 1 Thessalonians that relates to the issue is 1 Thess 5.14-15. It comes after two verses where Paul encourages them in good treatment of their leaders (vv 12-13). Paul then gives three-fold directions encouraging them to admonish the ἁτάκτοι, to encourage the faint-hearted and to help the weak. Some of these issues might be seen as the responsibility of the leaders,¹⁴⁶⁸ and Burke argues that Paul is referring to leading brothers.¹⁴⁶⁹ However while Burke provides helpful background information about family relationships, it is not clear that Paul has only

¹⁴⁵⁹ Agrell, *Work*, 99; Neil, *Thessalonians*, 88.

¹⁴⁶⁰ D. E. H. Whiteley, *Thessalonians*, Oxford: OUP, 1969, 66.

¹⁴⁶¹ Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 124.

¹⁴⁶² Bruce W. Winter, 'The Public Honouring of Christian Benefactors Romans 13.3-4 and 1 Peter 2.14-15,' *JSNT* 34 (1988) 87-103, citing 94.

¹⁴⁶³ Winter, *Welfare*, 51.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Richards, *Thessalonians*, 212.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Williams, *Thessalonians*, 78.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Robert Jewett, 'Tenement Churches and Communal Meals in the Early Church: the Implications of a Form-Critical Analysis of 2 Thessalonians 3.10,' *BR* 38 (1993) 23-43, citing 42.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Reidar Aasgaard, *"My Beloved Brothers and Sisters!" Christian Siblingship in Paul*, London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004, 165.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 209.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Burke, 'Family,' 285.

some brothers in mind. Paul makes it clear that it is the responsibility of all of them, addressing the whole body of believers as ἀδελφοί (5.14).¹⁴⁷⁰

Ἀτάκτοι is often translated as idle (NIV/ ESV) or idlers (NRSV) and there are papyri that exist with this meaning (P. Oxy. 275 (66 CE), P. Oxy. 725 (183 CE)).¹⁴⁷¹ However this is unlikely to be its only meaning otherwise Paul might be expected to use ἀργοί or ἀπρακτοί.¹⁴⁷² BDAG gives the main background as a military one where someone is not in order.¹⁴⁷³ Williams notes that it was used particularly in battle:¹⁴⁷⁴ thus ‘out of line’¹⁴⁷⁵ and ‘not in battle-order’.¹⁴⁷⁶

Jewett thinks this ‘standing against the order’¹⁴⁷⁷ may have included using the idea of privilege to get support.¹⁴⁷⁸ If the ἀτάκτοι thought they were being good leaders or being good community by reliance on others, Paul’s use of ἀτάκτοι corrects them in no uncertain terms.

In addition, and possibly in contrast, Paul wants them to avoid repaying evil with evil and to pursue good to each other and to all (5.15). This reminds the Thessalonians that, while some may need admonishing, this should not include repaying with evil. The wording of pursuing good (ἀγαθός) has benefaction connotations¹⁴⁷⁹ and is to be done not simply to those within the congregation but also to those beyond. This reiterates Paul’s point in 4.12 about proper relationships with outsiders and takes it further to doing good to outsiders.

6.3.4. Other Texts

There are a number of other texts in 1 Thessalonians which may help us understand the situation Paul is addressing and what he is saying. As Paul begins the letter he refers to τοῦ ἔργου τῆς πίστεως καὶ τοῦ κόπου τῆς ἀγάπης (1.3), possibly anticipating the issues he addresses later,¹⁴⁸⁰ but also linking work and love.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 209; Jones, *Epistles*, 70; Moore, *Thessalonians*, 81.

¹⁴⁷¹ Milligan, *Epistles*, 153–54.

¹⁴⁷² Malherbe, *Letter*, 317.

¹⁴⁷³ BDAG, 148.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Williams, *Thessalonians*, 96.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 210.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Moore, *Thessalonians*, 81.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 104.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 105.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Winter, *Welfare*, 42.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 26.

In 1 Thess 2.1–6 Paul writes about his first visit to Thessalonica in a way that contrasts with how philosophers entered and acted,¹⁴⁸¹ particularly the way they boasted and promoted themselves (Dio Chrysostom *Invid.* 27).¹⁴⁸²

Then in 2.8 Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the way that he and his companions shared their own souls with them. This deep sharing of themselves and commitment can also be seen in 2.17–3.6 and 3.9–12.¹⁴⁸³ Paul then links this sharing of himself with hard work (2.9): ‘sharing life is also about sharing work’.¹⁴⁸⁴ Paul’s work may again be in contrast to the way many orators entered a city and supported themselves. Hock points out the way orators and philosophers might charge fees, become a client, beg or work¹⁴⁸⁵ and Russell suggests that Paul works in order to distance himself from Cynic philosophers.¹⁴⁸⁶ As Walton points out this could suggest that Paul is contrasting himself with orators rather than opponents in the church.¹⁴⁸⁷ Fee and Moore suggest a Jewish background referencing *m. ’Abot* 2.2 and 4.5¹⁴⁸⁸ While these are later, it is plausible that the expectation that rabbis would have a trade preceded the Mishnah.

Paul works so as not to be a burden. In his entry and his working Paul models what he then teaches in 1 Thess 4.9–12 and 5.14–15. This could mean that the issue was already present when Paul was first with the Thessalonians;¹⁴⁸⁹ however this is hard to discern as Paul also works when he first proclaims the gospel in Corinth (1 Cor 9.9–18; Acts 18.1–3). Still it does give us an example of Paul teaching through his actions as well as his words,¹⁴⁹⁰ living out the virtues that he teaches,¹⁴⁹¹ and showing that it was possible to do so.¹⁴⁹²

¹⁴⁸¹ Bruce W. Winter, ‘The Entries and Ethics of Orators and Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:1–12),’ *TynBul* 44 (1993) 55–74.

¹⁴⁸² Winter, ‘Entries,’ 60–61.

¹⁴⁸³ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 73–74; Malherbe, *Letter*, 147.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Míguez, *Practice*, 66.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 2007, 52.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Russell, ‘Idle,’ citing 109.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Walton, *Leadership*, 155–56.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 78; Moore, *Thessalonians*, 39.

¹⁴⁸⁹ I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids/ London: Eerdmans/ Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1983, 72.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Judy Skeen, ‘Not as Enemies, But Kin: Discipline in the Family of God – 2 Thessalonians 3:6–10,’ *RevExp* 96 (1999) 287–94, citing 292.

¹⁴⁹¹ Winter, ‘Entries,’ 63.

¹⁴⁹² Malherbe, ‘Ethics,’ 203.

6.4. Second Thessalonians¹⁴⁹³

6.4.1. Introduction

Second Thessalonians is more specific about the issues surrounding the ἀτάκτοι.

There are questions about whether it is a Pauline letter or not.¹⁴⁹⁴ Agrell and Donfried both see the letter as non-Pauline¹⁴⁹⁵ and similarly Menken sees the letter as an ‘authentic reinterpretation’ of 1 Thessalonians.¹⁴⁹⁶

There are a number of issues that raise questions about the letter’s authenticity, particularly when compared to 1 Thessalonians. First, the tone of the letter – Jewett notes that 2 Thessalonians is seen as more authoritative¹⁴⁹⁷ and lacking in personal references.¹⁴⁹⁸ However, while not as affectionate as 1 Thessalonians, the tone of 2 Thessalonians is still warm.¹⁴⁹⁹ This can be seen in 1.3–4 where Paul is still positive about the Thessalonians and in 1.11 speaks of praying continually for them. Malherbe notes that some of the change of tone can be attributed to the change in situation between the two letters,¹⁵⁰⁰ and Foster notes that the Corinthian correspondence exhibits ‘greater variation of tone’ and its authenticity is not questioned.¹⁵⁰¹ Also if the letter is Pauline, the Thessalonians would have recently received 1 Thessalonians and therefore have had Paul’s affection clear in their minds.¹⁵⁰²

Secondly, the eschatology between the two letters is seen as different. Jewett notes the differences in eschatology between 2 Thess 2.1–12 and 1 Thess 5.1–11 and Menken argues that 1 Thess 4.15–18 indicates an imminent parousia while 2 Thess 2.1–12 does not.¹⁵⁰³ However as Menken himself acknowledges 2 Thessalonians

¹⁴⁹³ In this section scripture references will be to 2 Thessalonians unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁴⁹⁴ This section will conclude on balance that 2 Thessalonians is Pauline and will thus refer to the author of 2 Thessalonians as Paul.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Agrell, *Work*, 116; Donfried, *Paul*, 53.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Maarten J. J. Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, London/ New York: Routledge, 1994, 43.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 81.

¹⁴⁹⁸ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 7.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Malherbe, *Letter*, 351.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Malherbe, *Letter*, 367.

¹⁵⁰¹ Paul Foster, ‘Who Wrote 2 Thessalonians? A Fresh Look at an Old Problem,’ *JSNT* 35 (2012) 150–75, citing 157.

¹⁵⁰² Wanamaker argues that 2 Thessalonians (persecution present) precedes 1 Thessalonians (persecution past) (Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 38, 42) and that 3.17 makes more sense if 2 Thessalonians is the first letter (Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 38). However the Thessalonians could have experienced more than one time of persecution and while the reference in 2.15 could point to a previous non-extant letter, 1 Thessalonians seems a good fit (Foster, ‘Thessalonians,’ 162). In addition 2 Thessalonians is narrower in focus which would make sense if Paul were writing to clarify areas of the first letter which had not been fully understood (Foster, ‘Thessalonians,’ 162).

¹⁵⁰³ Menken, *Thessalonians*, 28.

does not deny the parousia; it just indicates that it will happen after some events (1.7; 2.3).¹⁵⁰⁴ While 2 Thess 2.2 speaks against the idea that the parousia is already here, 1 Thess 5.1–10 urges its readers to be prepared for the coming of the parousia and so the two passages are not necessarily contradictory. Foster notes that Paul's eschatology could have developed and that Paul may have adapted his teaching to the Thessalonians' response.¹⁵⁰⁵

In addition Barclay notes that apocalyptic writings are not necessarily consistent in their eschatology.¹⁵⁰⁶ He also suggests a possible situation where the Thessalonians had misinterpreted Paul and thought that the Day of the Lord was a separate event from the parousia, which may explain some of the nuances in Paul's argument.¹⁵⁰⁷

Thirdly, Menken argues that the literary correlations between the two letters are too close unless someone was copying 1 Thessalonians,¹⁵⁰⁸ but as Malherbe and Morris point out, while there are similarities between the letters they are not so similar.¹⁵⁰⁹ Morris notes that apart from the framework, similarities account for no more than a third of the letters and that sometimes they are used in different places and for different purposes.¹⁵¹⁰ For example, Paul talks about working with his hands in 1 Thess 2.9 as he points out his love for the Thessalonians and then in 2 Thess 3.7–9 in order to exhort them to follow his example.¹⁵¹¹

If 2 Thessalonians is not Pauline, we might expect it to have been produced at a later date, otherwise there would be a greater danger of it being discovered as non-Pauline. If 2 Thessalonians is non-Pauline and written later, the author would probably have known other Pauline letters and might well have included aspects from them. However Fee notes that 2 Thessalonians shows similarities to 1 Thessalonians but less so to later Pauline letters.¹⁵¹²

Fourthly, 2.2 is sometimes seen as referring to 1 Thessalonians as a 'forged' letter,¹⁵¹³ and the reference in 3.17 to his own writing and signature is then seen as

¹⁵⁰⁴ Menken, *Thessalonians*, 29–30.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Foster, 'Thessalonians,' 169.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Barclay, 'Conflict,' 525.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Barclay, 'Conflict,' 527.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Menken, *Thessalonians*, 39.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Morris, *Thessalonians*, 29; Malherbe, *Letter*, 357.

¹⁵¹⁰ Morris, *Thessalonians*, 29.

¹⁵¹¹ Morris, *Thessalonians*, 29–30.

¹⁵¹² Fee, *Thessalonians*, 240.

¹⁵¹³ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 7.

authenticating 2 Thessalonians in contrast to 1 Thessalonians.¹⁵¹⁴ However 2.15 speaks positively about the previous letter.¹⁵¹⁵ Additionally, as Foster points out, if 2 Thessalonians was non-Pauline, the person writing it would need a substantial knowledge of Paul's letters to know that the signature was authenticating, making it difficult for it to be an early non-Pauline letter, but later copies of it would not have included the signature making it difficult to envisage a late setting.¹⁵¹⁶ Also while a handwritten signature could be used to show authenticity,¹⁵¹⁷ it could also show ability and status.¹⁵¹⁸

None of these arguments for 2 Thessalonians being non-Pauline are conclusive. In addition, the letter is attested by Polycarp, Ignatius and Justin;¹⁵¹⁹ indeed Morris notes that 2 Thessalonians has better attestation than 1 Thessalonians.¹⁵²⁰ It is therefore likely that 2 Thessalonians was written by Paul shortly after Timothy brought a report from his visit to Thessalonica.

6.4.2. *Second Thessalonians 3.6-15*

In 3.6-15 Paul takes up the issue of ἀτάκτοι, this time at greater length. Again the letter includes issues around eschatology, but discussion of the eschatology is separated from discussion of the ἀτάκτοι by the request for prayer, and blessing (3.1-5).¹⁵²¹ As has already been noted the letter has a sharper tone, probably due to the need for correction,¹⁵²² and this can be seen in Paul's use of ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (3.6).¹⁵²³

This time Paul commands the believers to keep away from ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος (3.6) and later contrasts these people's actions with his actions using the verbal form: οὐκ ἠτακτήσαμεν ἐν ὑμῖν (3.7). Ἀτάκτοι was examined in the 1 Thess 5.14-15 section and both the words in 2 Thess 3.6-7 are related. BDAG defines ἀτάκτως περιπατεῖν as '*behave irresponsibly*' and ἀτάκτως on its own as '*in defiance of good order, disorderly*'.¹⁵²⁴

¹⁵¹⁴ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 7.

¹⁵¹⁵ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 17.

¹⁵¹⁶ Foster, 'Thessalonians,' 166.

¹⁵¹⁷ Keith, 'Hand,' , citing 45.

¹⁵¹⁸ Keith, 'Hand,' 54, 56.

¹⁵¹⁹ Morris, *Thessalonians*, 26.

¹⁵²⁰ Morris, *Thessalonians*, 26.

¹⁵²¹ Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 245.

¹⁵²² Jones, *Epistles*, 115.

¹⁵²³ Menken, *Thessalonians*, 130.

¹⁵²⁴ BDAG, 148.

Paul teaches that this behaviour is against the tradition that the Thessalonians received from him.¹⁵²⁵ He explains this tradition by using the example of himself and his companions (3.7–9). As in 1 Thess 2.9, Paul's intention is not to be a burden (3.8). He is careful not to deny his right to support (3.9), but notes that he wanted to be a model for the Thessalonians (3.9).¹⁵²⁶ Agrell observes that being an example is much more important as a reason in 2 Thess 3 than it is in 1 Cor 9.¹⁵²⁷

It is not simply Paul's and his companions' actions which show the tradition, but also the particular rule εἴ τις οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω (3.10), which they taught while they were there. Skeen suggests that this tradition goes back to Jesus,¹⁵²⁸ although there is not really sufficient evidence to discern whether this may be the case.

However there is some evidence of possible backgrounds. Menken argues that the Jewish tradition saw an obligation to work based on Gen 3.17–19,¹⁵²⁹ and Gaventa points to Ps 128.2. Agrell highlights that eating one's bread is a Hebraism.¹⁵³⁰ There are a number of suggested Jewish parallels. These include Prov 10.4 and *Gen. Rab.* 2; however these tend to be about the consequences of not working rather than about being unwilling to work.¹⁵³¹

Jewett argues that the rule is casuistic and therefore implies that an issue arose within the Christian community that was sufficiently important for regulation.¹⁵³² He notes that there are similar situations where exclusion from food is used for punishment in Qumran (1 QS 6.24–7.24)¹⁵³³ and in other situations where communities ate together regularly.¹⁵³⁴ One of the examples he gives is Lucian *Bis acc.* 13, which notes the withholding of food by parents as punishment for not studying well. While Jewett's highlighting of such parallels is helpful, it is unclear that all his examples are of situations where meals were regularly taken together, for

¹⁵²⁵ Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 251. Richards argues that Paul is focusing on disorder not lack of work, but the passage's later focus on work seems to belie this point (and Richards' assertion that that the ἀτάκτοι and eating one's own bread refer to different situations) (Richards, *Thessalonians*, 282, 382).

¹⁵²⁶ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 331.

¹⁵²⁷ Agrell, *Work*, 119.

¹⁵²⁸ Skeen, 'Enemies,' 293.

¹⁵²⁹ Menken, *Thessalonians*, 132.

¹⁵³⁰ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*; Agrell, *Work*, 119.

¹⁵³¹ Best, *Thessalonians*, 338–39.

¹⁵³² Jewett, 'Tenement,' 34, 38.

¹⁵³³ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 35.

¹⁵³⁴ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 36–37.

example guild meals.¹⁵³⁵ However his conclusion that Paul's reference is to eating in general (because of the absolute nature of the verb), not simply to 'exclusion from occasional sacramental celebrations',¹⁵³⁶ seems likely.

Paul's expectation that the Thessalonians would be able to prevent some of their members eating (3.10) suggests that they were eating together often enough so that they could implement the teaching. Paul's own description of his time with the Thessalonians points to a deep sharing of himself and those with him (1 Thess 2.8). This seems to indicate quite a deep and intimate sharing which may well have included regular meals and even other possessions.

The rule in 3.10 is sharp because the actions of those refusing to work affects the others (indeed Agrell goes as far as to say that they endanger others).¹⁵³⁷ The use of the continuous tense (οὐ θέλει ἐργάζεσθαι) implies that the attitude of refusal to work is habitual,¹⁵³⁸ and the use of the imperative (μηδὲ ἐσθιέτω) implies that the community had the capacity to withhold food.¹⁵³⁹

Paul's criticism is of those who are περιπατοῦντας ἐν ὑμῖν ἀτάκτως, μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους ἀλλὰ περιεργαζομένους (3.11), which includes a play on words with ἐργαζομένους and περιεργαζομένους.¹⁵⁴⁰ BDAG defines περιεργαζομέναι as intrusive meddling¹⁵⁴¹ and it is used in a number of contexts by Greek writers. Plutarch uses it of a man correcting others, but not correcting his own behaviour (*Mor.* 516A). Polybius uses περιεργαζομέναι of someone concerning themselves with affairs that are not their own (Polybius *His.* 18.51.2), and Plato uses it in contrast to justice and doing one's own business (*Resp.* 433AB).

Agrell suggests that those who were not working may have been stopping others working.¹⁵⁴² Alternatively Frame suggests they may have been meddling in church management.¹⁵⁴³ This could have been through trying to get support from the church,¹⁵⁴⁴ which might explain why Paul is keen to emphasise that he was not a

¹⁵³⁵ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 36.

¹⁵³⁶ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 37.

¹⁵³⁷ Agrell, *Work*, 121.

¹⁵³⁸ Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984, 254.

¹⁵³⁹ Jewett, 'Tenement,' ; Morris, *Epistles*, 255.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Malherbe, *Letter*, 453.

¹⁵⁴¹ BDAG, 800.

¹⁵⁴² Agrell, *Work*, 123.

¹⁵⁴³ Frame, *Epistles*, 162.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Frame, *Epistles*, 162.

burden while he was with them. Irrespective of the details of how they were meddling, they were ‘disturbing the shalom of the community as a whole.’¹⁵⁴⁵

Having spoken about how those who are not the ἀτάκτοι should respond to them, Paul then speaks to the ἀτάκτοι / περιπατοῦντας ἀτάκτως. Here he speaks less directly and adds παρακαλοῦμεν to παραγγέλλομεν, leading Williams to comment that his ‘pastoral concern for them is evident’.¹⁵⁴⁶ He also does not use ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, as in verse 6 but rather ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ (3.12). Thus Morris argues that Paul gives it more of a ‘brotherly ring, and at the same time it has the effect of drawing attention to the obligations consequent on the fact they were in Christ’.¹⁵⁴⁷ Paul’s instruction to the ἀτάκτοι is that they are to work quietly and eat their own bread. ‘Although this is usually interpreted in terms of each person providing for his or her own sustenance, the choice of a plural possessive pronoun ἐαυτῶν more naturally fits the context of communal self-sufficiency.’¹⁵⁴⁸

Russell notes that there is a tradition of living quietly in Hellenistic thought used of a philosopher retiring ‘from public life to pursue his studies’;¹⁵⁴⁹ for example P. Oxy. 128 uses ἡσυχία in the context of giving up ‘honorary public duties’.¹⁵⁵⁰ Similarly Plato uses ἡσυχία of a philosopher minding his own affairs (*Resp.* 6.496D). This is unlikely to be Paul’s intention here as Paul goes on to exhort the congregation as a whole: μὴ ἐγκακήσητε καλοποιοῦντες (3.13). The Thessalonians are not to be weary because some sponge or are dependent, nor because of opposition in the city.¹⁵⁵¹ Rather they are to do good. Καλοποιέω has a range of meanings including to do right and to confer benefits. BDAG notes ‘*do what is right, good*’.¹⁵⁵² Wanamaker points out this is a call not to be like the ἀτάκτοι.¹⁵⁵³ It is not just a call to keep out of trouble, but rather an expectation of ‘doing of good which benefitted the lives of others’.¹⁵⁵⁴ Thus work is not simply to provide for oneself (or the group), but as a means of serving.¹⁵⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴⁵ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 333.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Williams, *Thessalonians*, 147.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Morris, *Epistles*, 256.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Jewett, ‘Tenement,’ 42.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Russell, ‘Idle,’ 109.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Winter, *Welfare*, 49.

¹⁵⁵¹ Whiteley, *Thessalonians*, 110; Bruce W. Winter, ‘If a man does not wish to work ...’ *TynBul* 40 (1989) 303–15, citing 314–15.

¹⁵⁵² BDAG, 504.

¹⁵⁵³ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 288.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Winter, *Welfare*, 57.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Best, *Thessalonians*, 337.

Paul then gives instructions about what to do if his instructions are not followed – the Thessalonians are to mark such people and not associate with them (3.14–15). As Oakes notes in Roman society there would have been an obligation not to associate with a troublemaker.¹⁵⁵⁶ However the aim of Paul’s instruction is not exclusion, but change¹⁵⁵⁷ – those who are affected are brothers, not outsiders. Also avoidance may have been the ‘only way of relieving the Christian patron of his obligation’.¹⁵⁵⁸

6.5. Possible Backgrounds

So what exactly is going on? What causes some to stop working and be disruptive? There are various possibilities.

6.5.1. Eschatology

Both 1 and 2 Thessalonians include sections on eschatological questions and use apocalyptic imagery or language. Therefore some scholars have seen the eschatological expectations of the Thessalonians as linked to the ἀτάκτοι. Agrell sees the problems being a result of a ‘combination of near-expectation and the delay of the parousia.’¹⁵⁵⁹ A belief in an arrived or imminent parousia may have relativised other actions. For example it may have meant that the spiritual was seen as more important than the physical or practical.¹⁵⁶⁰ Thiselton argues that Paul’s eschatology, in both Thessalonians and Corinthians, relativises everyday activities as “‘ends” in themselves’: however he ‘does not say that they are hardly worth doing, only that they take second place’.¹⁵⁶¹ It may be that some Thessalonians heard the relativisation but not the form of the relativisation. Jewett suggests that the belief in the presence of a new age may have led to a belief that traditional mores about the social order, work and sex were superseded.¹⁵⁶² Alternatively if the Day of the Lord was believed to have arrived, some Thessalonians may have thought they had entered into the Sabbath rest.¹⁵⁶³ Frame suggests that the ἀτάκτοι were so excited that they were unfit to work and therefore were idle and meddling.¹⁵⁶⁴

¹⁵⁵⁶ Peter Oakes, *Philippians From People to Letter*, Cambridge: CUP, 2001, 101.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 337–38.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Winter, ‘Man,’ 313.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Agrell, *Work*, 103.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Russell, ‘Idle,’ 106.

¹⁵⁶¹ Thiselton, *Epistle*, 581.

¹⁵⁶² Jewett, *Correspondence*, 172–73; also Donfried, *Paul*, 230.

¹⁵⁶³ Whiteley, *Thessalonians*, 108.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Frame, *Epistles*, 160.

A related possibility is that the imminence of the parousia may have led some Thessalonians to see evangelism as a priority.¹⁵⁶⁵ If they saw themselves as doing apostolic work,¹⁵⁶⁶ it may have led to an expectation or request for food to be provided for them. Giving up work to evangelise may have led others to see these Thessalonians in a similar light to Cynics who gave up work and begged.¹⁵⁶⁷ In addition Paul may have been concerned about the way such Thessalonians were evangelising. Barclay suggests that Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians to live quietly may have been to counter 'the dangers of aggressive evangelism which ridicules "idols" and calls attention repeatedly to the sudden destruction about to fall on all who do not believe in Jesus'.¹⁵⁶⁸

Eschatological issues and concerns around work / the ἀτάκτοι are present in both letters, so both are at the least 'focal issues'.¹⁵⁶⁹ However Paul does not make a link between the two.¹⁵⁷⁰ Paul tells the Thessalonians that he has already instructed them about the issue around the ἀτάκτοι when he was with them (2 Thess 3.6) and Fee argues that there is not evidence of eschatological fervor at that point.¹⁵⁷¹ Fee also argues that while Paul does address eschatological issues in the letters, there does not seem to be 'a heightened or intense eschatological expectation'.¹⁵⁷² If eschatology was the issue at hand we might expect Paul to have said 'all must work right up to the Parousia' or 'all must work because the Parousia might not come as soon as you suppose'.¹⁵⁷³ In addition the eschatological explanation does not explain why Paul links work with brotherly love.¹⁵⁷⁴ Ascough helpfully notes the shift in 1 Thess 5.12-22 to talking about 'internal community relationships' and argues that therefore the ἀτάκτοι reference within this section is not necessarily linked to the eschatology section.¹⁵⁷⁵

¹⁵⁶⁵ 1 Thess 1.8 is sometimes seen as referring to the missionary preaching activity of the Thessalonians (Malherbe, *Letter*, 117), however as it refers to reports of how the Thessalonians received Paul, his companions and the gospel, this seems unlikely. It probably refers to reports travelling with individuals or, as Ascough argues, it could refer to honours that the Thessalonians ascribed to God and the missionaries (Ascough, 'Mission,' 61).

¹⁵⁶⁶ Skeen, 'Enemies,' 291.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Malherbe, *Letter*, 254.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Barclay, 'Thessalonica,' 53.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Skeen, 'Enemies,' 289.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Agrell, *Work*; Shaw, *Cost*, 39; Blomberg, *Poverty*, 180; Fee, *Thessalonians*, 324; Malherbe, *Letter*, 254.

¹⁵⁷¹ Fee, *Thessalonians*, 324.

¹⁵⁷² Fee, *Thessalonians*, 324.

¹⁵⁷³ Moore, *Thessalonians*, 118.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 162.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Ascough, 'Community,' 319.

Paul's use of eschatological language and imagery could have wider reasons than simply questions that the Thessalonians or Timothy had reported. Paul's language and imagery does include Jewish eschatological imagery (for example end-time signs 1 Thess 4.16; heavenly ascent and theophanic clouds 4.17; and the day of the Lord 5.2).¹⁵⁷⁶ Paul may have taught Gentile believers about Jewish eschatology;¹⁵⁷⁷ however parallels in language can also be seen in the imperial cult.

We have already highlighted the presence of the imperial cult in Thessalonica and some of the risks for believers.¹⁵⁷⁸ Paul's eschatology could be in response to imperial eschatology.¹⁵⁷⁹ There are a number of key linguistic links.¹⁵⁸⁰ Koester notes that παρουσία is not used in a technical sense in pre-Christian apocalyptic literature for the coming of the Lord,¹⁵⁸¹ and Rulmu notes the Latin equivalent is found on coins commemorating Nero's visit to Patras and Corinth.¹⁵⁸² It is often used 'for the arrival of a king or emperor'.¹⁵⁸³ Ἐπιφανής is often used of the Julio-Claudians.¹⁵⁸⁴ Imperial inscriptions often use words that overlap with the terminology of 1 Thessalonians, for example εἰρήνη, ἐπιφάνεια, ἐλπίς, εὐαγγέλιον, σωτηρία, and χάρα.¹⁵⁸⁵ Εἰρήνη και ἀσφάλεια (1 Thess 5.3) also has a Roman background connected with the security brought about by empire.¹⁵⁸⁶ Ἀπάντησις which is used in 1 Thess 4.17 of meeting with Jesus is also used by Cicero of the welcome Julius Caesar received in towns (*Att.* 8.16 – ἀπαντήσεις).¹⁵⁸⁷ Thus Paul's focus on eschatological questions and use of eschatological language may be, at least in part, to emphasise that 'There is only one epiphany and parousia worth waiting for – Christ's'.¹⁵⁸⁸

¹⁵⁷⁶ Harrison, 'Paul,' 77.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Although Harrison notes that Paul's letters have less apocalyptic imagery as time progresses (Harrison, 'Paul,' 78).

¹⁵⁷⁸ See §6.2.1, §6.2.2.

¹⁵⁷⁹ Horsley ed. *Paul*, 6.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Horsley ed. *Paul*, 140.

¹⁵⁸¹ Koester, 'Ideology,' 158.

¹⁵⁸² G. Mendel, *Fouilles de Tégée: rapport sommaire sur la campagne de 1900-1901/1901*; Rulmu, 'Ambition,' 407-08.

¹⁵⁸³ Koester, 'Ideology,' 158; also Horsley ed. *Paul*, 142.

¹⁵⁸⁴ Harrison, 'Paul,' 83.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Harrison, 'Paul,' 91; Horsley ed. *Paul*, 142.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Koester, 'Ideology,' 162; Harrison, 'Paul,' 86.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Rulmu, 'Ambition,' 408.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Harrison, 'Paul,' 84.

6.5.2. *Suffering and Persecution*

Acts 17 notes the uproar in Thessalonica. If Christians continued to be associated with the disturbance, they may well have been seen as disorderly and thus have been condemned.¹⁵⁸⁹ In addition becoming followers of Jesus could lead to a variety of challenges for believers. They may have found it difficult to find work or to find a patron outside the faith community, as their exclusive worship would have 'weakened connection with Roma-related benefactors'.¹⁵⁹⁰ Therefore they may have been tempted not to look for work. Paul's exhortation in 1 Thess 4.11 φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν may have been to encourage them to 'remain incognito'¹⁵⁹¹ and 'avoid further trouble for themselves'.¹⁵⁹²

Barclay also notes the reinforcing nature of apocalyptic symbols in situations of persecution and conflict.¹⁵⁹³ Therefore Paul's focus on eschatological themes may have been to encourage the Thessalonians in the face of persecution.¹⁵⁹⁴

6.5.3. *Patronage*

Another possible background to the issue of the ἀτάκτοι is patronage. Paul is concerned in 1 and 2 Thessalonians as well as in other letters to emphasise that he has not been a burden (1 Thess 2.9; 2 Thess 3.7-8; 2 Cor 11.8-9) – i.e. that he has not acted in a manner seeking patronage. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to do good (1 Thess 5.15; 2 Thess 3.13). Both καλός and ἀγαθός were used in connection with praising benefactors.¹⁵⁹⁵ SIG §174, §167 and §1105 all link doing good with being a benefactor.¹⁵⁹⁶ In addition it is suggested the words used to praise a benefactor referred to by Dio Chrysostom in *Or.* 75.7-8 may be ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός ἐστι.¹⁵⁹⁷ Winter argues that καλοποιέω is a synonym for ἀγαθοποιέω with both being benefaction terms.¹⁵⁹⁸ Similarly deSilva sees 1 Thess 3.12 and 5.15 as directing Christians to be benefactors.¹⁵⁹⁹ Paul also encourages them to be quiet

¹⁵⁸⁹ Oakes, *Philippians*, 101.

¹⁵⁹⁰ Rulmu, 'Ambition,' 409.

¹⁵⁹¹ Rulmu, 'Ambition,' 416.

¹⁵⁹² Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 163.

¹⁵⁹³ Barclay, 'Thessalonica,' 49-56.

¹⁵⁹⁴ See §6.5.1.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Winter, *Welfare*, 31-32. Rigaux sees them as synonymous (Rigaux, *Paul*, 714).

¹⁵⁹⁶ Winter, *Welfare*, 35.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Winter, *Welfare*, 31.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Winter, *Welfare*, 58.

¹⁵⁹⁹ David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity. Unlocking New Testament Culture*, Downers Grove: IVP, 2000, 147.

which may be against ‘political rabble-rousing behaviour by clients on behalf of their patrons’.¹⁶⁰⁰

Russell argues that there is likely to be a patronage background to the issue and that those Christian who were poorer may have looked to the new community to find patrons rather than to their old patrons.¹⁶⁰¹ This may in part have been because continuing with their old patrons could have led to potentially difficult compromises.¹⁶⁰² Even if someone had been previously working and not particularly dependent on a patron, when they became a Christian, they may have found greater difficulties in finding or continuing their work, because of how they were perceived as Christians.¹⁶⁰³ This may have led them to expect richer Christians to support them.¹⁶⁰⁴

Paul was concerned that the lifestyle of the believers should be a good witness to the gospel and as ‘clients were not generally admired’¹⁶⁰⁵ (for example see Juvenal *Sat.* 5.1–5) this may have also lent weight to his concern that the Thessalonians should not be clients. However with his focus on doing good, Paul goes further than simply self-sufficiency. Winter argues that for Paul ‘[t]he secular client must now become a private Christian benefactor’.¹⁶⁰⁶ While it is not clear that Paul is necessarily encouraging private as opposed to collective benefaction, he certainly encourages the Thessalonians to actions that would have been seen as acting as patrons.

6.5.4. *Famine*

Winter suggests that the patronage issue is exacerbated by famine. He argues that idleness is an issue in 2 Thessalonians but not in 1 Thessalonians¹⁶⁰⁷ and that after Paul writes 1 Thessalonians there is a year of some form of hardship, possibly famine (Tacitus *Ann.* 12.43).¹⁶⁰⁸ Therefore those who were less well off sought out patrons in order to survive and then after the famine abated continued to depend on

¹⁶⁰⁰ Winter, *Welfare*, 48.

¹⁶⁰¹ Russell, ‘Idle,’ 112–13.

¹⁶⁰² Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 249.

¹⁶⁰³ Oakes, *Philippians*, 90–92: writing in the Philippian context.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Blomberg, *Poverty*, 180. Issues around political representation may have exacerbated issues for the early believers. Rulmu reports that Rome was increasing privileges to artisans, but that this could lead to difficulties in relationship with elites (Rulmu, ‘Ambition,’ 410–415).

¹⁶⁰⁵ Walton, *Leadership*, 170.

¹⁶⁰⁶ Winter, *Welfare*, 42.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Winter, ‘Man,’ 331.

¹⁶⁰⁸ Winter, *Welfare*, 56.

them.¹⁶⁰⁹ Thus Paul's concern in 2 Thessalonians is to encourage these people back to work. While there is evidence of food shortages in this era¹⁶¹⁰ and there is more detailed instruction about work and the ἀτάκτοι in 2 Thessalonians compared to 1 Thessalonians, there is already an issue at the time that 1 Thessalonians was written (4.11-12; 5.14). While a food shortage may have exacerbated the situation, it seems unlikely that it was the sole cause or that it can be narrowed to have affected Thessalonica simply between the writing of the two letters.

6.5.5. *Gnosticism*

Schmithals sees similar issues of idleness in 1 Timothy (e.g. 1 Tim 5.13, 15)¹⁶¹¹ where he also sees Gnosticism. This together with the evidence of religious zeal and mission in 1 and 2 Thessalonians leads him to argue there is a Gnostic background to the problems in Thessalonica which involves a focus on religious experience and neglect of manual labour.¹⁶¹² However 1 Tim 5.13 does not use ἀτάκτοι to describe the idle, but rather ἀργαί. In addition the absence of Gnostic language in the Thessalonian letters¹⁶¹³ and the lack of evidence of the presence of Gnostic missionaries¹⁶¹⁴ make it very unlikely that Gnosticism is a factor in the issue of the ἀτάκτοι.

6.5.6. *Cynics and Philosophers*

Hock suggests that the ἀτάκτοι may have modelled themselves on the Cynics, who tended to beg (Diogenes Laertius *LEP* 6.6, 49).¹⁶¹⁵ Those labourers who stopped work on taking up philosophy were criticised (Lucian *Fug.* 12-16),¹⁶¹⁶ and being a Cynic was generally seen as shameful (ps Diogenes *Ep.* 34, also Diogenes Laertius *LEP* 10.119-20). Thus Jewett argues that Paul may have used ἡσυχάζειν as an encouragement to the Thessalonians to distance themselves from the Cynics.¹⁶¹⁷ However the Cynic practice is not clear-cut, as there are examples of them teaching in workshops, particularly Simon the shoemaker (Ps Soc *Ep.* 13, 18).¹⁶¹⁸ Therefore the ἀτάκτοι cannot be following all Cynic practice, as there are examples of

¹⁶⁰⁹ Winter, *Welfare*, 56-57.

¹⁶¹⁰ See §3.2.1.1.

¹⁶¹¹ Walter Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1972, 159.

¹⁶¹² Schmithals, *Paul*, 160

¹⁶¹³ Russell, 'Idle,' 110; Jewett, *Correspondence*, 149.

¹⁶¹⁴ Jewett, *Correspondence*, 148.

¹⁶¹⁵ Hock, *Context*, 30, 55.

¹⁶¹⁶ Malherbe, 'Ethics,' 216.

¹⁶¹⁷ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 41.

¹⁶¹⁸ Hock, *Context*, 38-39; Malherbe, *Letter*, 161.

working and of begging. It is possible some of the ἀτάκτοι may have partly been following the practice of those who gave up working (Lucian *Fug.* 17), although this seems unlikely given Paul's clear example of working while he was with them.

6.5.7. Views on Work

The issue of the ἀτάκτοι is often seen as being influenced by the Hellenistic view of work, in comparison with Paul's more Jewish approach to work. Agrell notes that the rabbis were generally positive about work and cites *m. 'Abot* 1.10 (this could be late);¹⁶¹⁹ however Malherbe notes that *Sir* 38.24–39.11 has a less high view of work.¹⁶²⁰

Agrell argues that the Greek view of manual work was very low.¹⁶²¹ Best notes that this included the belief that only intellectual work was appropriate for free men.¹⁶²² Cicero sees different work as appropriate for different people and says of manual work 'the very wage they receive is a pledge of their slavery' (Cicero *Off.* 1.42), seeing it as 'appropriate for slaves, but not free men'.¹⁶²³ Artisans were also despised (Plutarch *Per.* 1.4–2.2). Thus Gaventa suggests that the ἀτάκτοι issue may have been caused by the believers seeing their freedom in Christ meaning that they were not slaves and therefore that they were not subject to work in the same way as they had been.¹⁶²⁴ Morris suggests they may have asked themselves 'why should they work like slaves?'¹⁶²⁵

However Greek thought was not monochrome in its approach to work.¹⁶²⁶ For example Dio Chrysostom was more positive about it, although he also talks about the appropriateness of different types of work and speaks against those that might cause the person harm or be too sedentary (*Ven.* 7.103–127). Hock notes that Paul's approach, which saw 'idleness as inappropriate for believers',¹⁶²⁷ was similar to Dio's.¹⁶²⁸ In addition Russell notes that there are examples of aristocrats who took up work when they needed to.¹⁶²⁹

¹⁶¹⁹ Agrell, *Work*, 47.

¹⁶²⁰ Malherbe, *Letter*, 160–61.

¹⁶²¹ Agrell, *Work*, 101.

¹⁶²² Best, *Thessalonians*, 338.

¹⁶²³ Walton, 'Paul,' 222; also Hock, *Context*, 45.

¹⁶²⁴ Gaventa, *Thessalonians*, 59.

¹⁶²⁵ Morris, *Thessalonians*, 147.

¹⁶²⁶ Richards, *Thessalonians*, 211–12.

¹⁶²⁷ Walton, 'Paul,' 225.

¹⁶²⁸ Hock, *Context*, 45.

¹⁶²⁹ Russell, 'Idle,' 112.

This range of views within Greek and Jewish thought means that there were potentially various views of manual labour in Thessalonica and within the Thessalonian church. While the view that saw manual work as incompatible with being free may have contributed to the issue, it does not explain the whole situation.

6.5.8. *Living Quarters: Tenements or Households?*

Jewett argues that the Thessalonian church may well have been based in tenements rather than households and that this may have contributed to the issues around the ὀτάκτοι. He argues that if there were a richer householder providing support as a patron there would have been less of a problem with those who refused to work.¹⁶³⁰ He notes that οἶκος can be used of a range of building types¹⁶³¹ and that the majority of buildings in a city did not have an atrium or peristyle but rather were tenement buildings.¹⁶³² Such buildings sometimes had flimsy partitions that could be moved for residents to meet together¹⁶³³ and some remains suggest that there were communal common rooms in some buildings.¹⁶³⁴ However Gehring notes that Jewett does not provide evidence that the partitions were moveable and the archeological evidence does not support it.¹⁶³⁵

Frier also argues that some lodging houses had a common kitchen and so residents may have eaten together,¹⁶³⁶ and cites Petronius' *Satyricon* as evidence. While Petronius provides evidence of lodging houses having a cook, being able to arrange with the cook what they were going to eat (*Satyricon* 90, 92), and a pot which was empty 'all the guests having drunk from it' (95), guests appear to be eating in different places, because of the references to entering and exiting (95, 96). Therefore it is not clear that it provides evidence of the whole lodging house eating together. While Adams acknowledges inns as a possible place for Christians to meet, he notes that they would only be suitable for limited numbers and therefore posits that they might be used by small groups of Christians travelling together.¹⁶³⁷

¹⁶³⁰ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 38.

¹⁶³¹ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 24.

¹⁶³² Jewett, 'Tenement,' 32.

¹⁶³³ Bruce W. Frier, *Landlords and Tenants in Imperial Rome*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, 4.

¹⁶³⁴ Frier, *Landlords*, 28. For example Insula Orientalis II.4-19 in Herculaneum (David Balch, 'Rich Pompeiian Houses, Shops for Rent, and the Huge Apartment Building in Herculaneum as Typical Spaces for Pauline House Churches,' *JSNT* 27 (2004) 27-46, citing 34).

¹⁶³⁵ Gehring, *Church*, 149; also Adams, *Places*, 8.

¹⁶³⁶ Frier, *Landlords*, 28.

¹⁶³⁷ Adams, *Places*, 165.

Jewett suggests that Romans 16.14–15 with its lists of a number of leaders for particular churches without the use of κατ'οἶκον αὐτῶν may indicate believers meeting together with a joint collective leadership in a tenement situation.¹⁶³⁸ He argues that if similar groups existed in Thessalonica, none of the believers within the group would have been rich enough to provide for the rest of the group and therefore all would have needed to contribute when they ate together.¹⁶³⁹ It is probable that there were groups of Christians meeting together who may not have had a patron; however it seems less likely that Jewett's tenement proposal would work as he suggests it. Nevertheless there are a number of possible meeting places, including workshops, for such a group.¹⁶⁴⁰

6.6. The Example of Sharing in 1 and 2 Thessalonians

The example of sharing in the Thessalonian letters is rooted in familial love. Paul links love for brothers and sisters with work (1 Thess 4.9–12) as well as love with provision for brothers and sisters (1 Thess 4.9–10). Weaver notes Paul's focus on the Thessalonians being brothers¹⁶⁴¹ and Donfried concludes that 'family structures lie at the heart of this new family in Christ'.¹⁶⁴² As noted earlier, Burke argues that in 1 Thessalonians Paul focuses on church as family in his use of 'kinship terminology'.¹⁶⁴³ This love involves deep sharing, which is seen both in Paul's and his companions' example (1 Thess 2.8) and in his praise for the Thessalonians (1 Thess 4.9–10). In 1 Thess 2.8 Paul speaks of them sharing their very selves with the Thessalonians. This does seem to indicate quite a deep intimate sharing which may well have included possessions. This sharing and love is present within the Thessalonian community as well as from them to believers further afield (1 Thess 4.10).

However there are issues within the Thessalonian community with a group who seem to choose to be dependent on others and disruptive (1 Thess 5.14; 2 Thess 3.11). There are a number of possible causes for this and it seems likely that there is a mix of reasons behind this group's actions. While it is probable that patronage norms are a key part of the reason that the ἀτάκτοι are not working, this does not preclude issues around eschatology, particularly of individuals involved in

¹⁶³⁸ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 29–31.

¹⁶³⁹ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 32.

¹⁶⁴⁰ For further evidence of other possibilities see Adams, *Places*.

¹⁶⁴¹ D. J. Weaver, '2 Thessalonians 3:6–15,' *Int* 61 (2007) 426–28, citing 427–28.

¹⁶⁴² Donfried, *Paul*, 155.

¹⁶⁴³ Burke, 'Family,' 270.

evangelism presuming to depend on the congregation for support, also contributing to the situation. It is likely from Paul's use of ἄτάκτοι that it is not simply that this group is choosing not to work, but that it is also being disruptive. Admittedly this disruption may be as a result of them not working, either through then having time to occupy themselves in other ways, or through difficulties within the community as a result of a group of people not pulling their weight.

While Paul makes it clear that the Thessalonians' love and sharing is commendable, he uses the same focus on love to place boundaries on the ways that the sharing takes place. He links love and work and places responsibility on individuals not to exploit others (1 Thess 4.11–12; 2 Thess 3.7–8).¹⁶⁴⁴ Rather all are to work (1 Thess 4.11; 1 Thess 3.12) and to play their part.¹⁶⁴⁵ This is not a question of those who are unable to find work being penalised, but rather of those who refuse to work (2 Thess 3.10), and Winter notes that Paul presumes that the believers should respond to 'real needs'.¹⁶⁴⁶ Paul is concerned that the believers should not be burdens. He has made this clear on an individual basis with his actions to avoid burdening the believers, but Jewett indicates this could also be a communal sufficiency.¹⁶⁴⁷ This focus on individual working and on not being a burden could also indicate Paul espousing parity between individuals within the community rather than dependency,¹⁶⁴⁸ and Paul's intention that social differentiation should not be 'determinative of the structure of Christian community life'.¹⁶⁴⁹

However the example Paul provides is not simply of love and sharing within the community at Thessalonica, it is also one of sharing with believers elsewhere (1 Thess 4.10), presumably through hospitality and possibly through contributing to need (2 Cor 8.1–2).

The example is also one where sharing, relationships and work are key to right relationships with those outside the community. Paul is concerned that the Thessalonians should behave properly towards outsiders and be dependent on no one (1 Thess 4.12), which would support Jewett's suggestion that the sufficiency is communal. The example includes doing good beyond the Christian community

¹⁶⁴⁴ Wanamaker, *Thessalonians*, 163.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Moore, *Thessalonians*, 118.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Winter, *Welfare*, 59.

¹⁶⁴⁷ Jewett, 'Tenement,' 42.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Witherington, *Thessalonians*, 118.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Jones, *Epistles*, 117.

using words that are used of benefaction¹⁶⁵⁰ and thus Winter concludes that Paul is calling the Thessalonians to be benefactors.¹⁶⁵¹

The example is one that includes individual and community responsibility. Paul has been clear that individuals are to work and concern themselves with their own affairs (1 Thess 4.11). However it seems plausible that the call not to be a burden is both individual and communal, and the call to benefaction also encompasses the whole community.

The example is one where there is a relationship between teaching and actions and where the teacher's actions are to be imitated (2 Thess 3.7).¹⁶⁵²

6.7. Comparisons

Having considered the example of sharing evidenced in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, we now turn to compare this example with other first century examples: the Epicureans, who focused on quiet living and were known for being dependent on others; family life, because of Paul's use of fictive kinship language; Macedonian Associations, which Ascough argues provide a number of parallels to the Thessalonian church; and patronage, which we have previously noted pervaded Graeco-Roman relationships and could lead to an expectation of being dependent on a patron.

6.7.1. Epicureans

Epicureans (followers of the philosophical school founded by Epicurus 341-270 BCE)¹⁶⁵³ were known for their focus on a quiet and private life (Diogenes Laertius *LEP* 10.119)¹⁶⁵⁴ and withdrawal from society (Plutarch *Mor.* 1098DE).¹⁶⁵⁵ They believed it was preferable to 'live off others' manual labour'.¹⁶⁵⁶ Epicurus advises those who would be wise only to earn by wisdom, and if they find themselves poor to court the king (Diogenes Laertius, *LEP* 10.119-120).

The Epicureans formed communities. Within them they would exhort and encourage one another with frank criticism.¹⁶⁵⁷ They saw one another as friends

¹⁶⁵⁰ See §6.5.3.

¹⁶⁵¹ Winter, 'Man,' 318.

¹⁶⁵² Weaver, 'Thessalonians,' 428.

¹⁶⁵³ Tomlin, 'Christians,' 53.

¹⁶⁵⁴ Malherbe, *Letter*, 259.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Hock, *Context*, 46.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977, 25. Malherbe references Philodemus *Peri Oikonomias* 23.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians. The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987, 40, 42.

and in each community there were ranks based on friendship,¹⁶⁵⁸ where more mature members guided less mature members. There is some evidence of them providing limited help and sharing to one another as friends, although it should not be all the time (Vatican Collection 39).¹⁶⁵⁹

As Malherbe notes they were ‘severely criticized in antiquity, partly for their withdrawal from and disregard for society.’¹⁶⁶⁰

While the focus on quiet is similar to Paul’s exhortation to the Thessalonians and while the idea of living off others’ manual work has parallels with the actions of the ἀτάκτοι, there are a number of differences.

First, it is not clear that the dependency on others is the same. For the Thessalonians the dependency seems to be mainly within the congregation, for Paul is able to presume that the congregation has the capacity to refuse food to ἀτάκτοι (2 Thess 3.10). Where the Epicureans were dependent, it was generally on those outside the community.

Secondly, the quiet espoused by Paul is different from the quiet that characterized the Epicureans’ lives. For Paul not only advocates quiet, he also advocates work and encourages the Thessalonians to have a right relationship with outsiders and do good to them (1 Thess 4.12; 5.15; 2 Thess 3.13). This focus on quiet and work is also about not living off others.

Thirdly, Malherbe also notes the difference between Paul’s claim to be God-taught (1 Thess 4.9) and the Epicurean claim to be self-taught (Cicero *Fin.* 1.71; *Nat. d.* 1.72).¹⁶⁶¹

Fourthly, Downing highlights the way the Epicureans focused on one another as friends while Paul does not use the language of friends but of brothers (1 Thess 4.10; 5.12, 14; 2 Thess 3.6).¹⁶⁶²

Fifthly, while there is some help / sharing as friends within the Epicurean communities, and there is an expected limit to such help, there are differences in the help / sharing and in the limit. The Epicurean community presumes a particular social level in order to avoid manual work and it does not appear to include eating together regularly, while the Thessalonians are eating together regularly. The limit

¹⁶⁵⁸ Malherbe, *Paul*, 85, 87.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Malherbe, *Paul*, 43, 103; Malherbe, *Aspects*, 27. <http://www.epicurus.info/etexts/VS.html> accessed 14/08/14.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Malherbe, *Aspects*, 25.

¹⁶⁶¹ Malherbe, *Paul*, 104–05.

¹⁶⁶² F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches*, London: Routledge, 1998, 283

also seems to be more about friendship expectations rather than the limit Paul puts in for those who refuse to participate in work and thus contribute.

6.7.2. *Family Life*

The way that ἀδελφοί is an important metaphor both for Paul¹⁶⁶³ and for Jesus¹⁶⁶⁴ suggests that family life and relationships may be a helpful comparator for the example of sharing in the Thessalonian church.¹⁶⁶⁵ However there are a number of issues with attempting such a comparison. First, which society to consider as a possible comparator: Greek, as Thessalonica was founded by Alexander's general; Roman, because of Roman influence in Thessalonica from 197 BCE;¹⁶⁶⁶ or Second Temple Judaism, because it is Paul writing?

Secondly, even if it were possible to choose one of the cultural backgrounds, it is important to recognise that they are not homogeneous entities and there is variety depending on location, date and influence from other cultures.¹⁶⁶⁷

Thirdly, literary and judicial sources tend to give an upper class perspective and while epitaphs include a greater social range, they still do not include those who would have been unable to commission one.¹⁶⁶⁸ Therefore it is important to recognise the limitations of the comparison.

Family relationships included an expectation of fulfilling roles and partnership. In all three cultures, there is evidence about marriage relationships, including the norms of property ownership and the expected roles and work of husband and wife to contribute to the family.¹⁶⁶⁹ In some instances sharing is seen as the ideal in marriage and family (Cicero *Off.* 1.54),¹⁶⁷⁰ although if the Roman marriage was not

¹⁶⁶³ Horrell, 'ἀδελφοί,' 299.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Andreas Köstenberger, 'Marriage and Family in the New Testament,' in Ken M. Campbell, ed. *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003, 245–47.

¹⁶⁶⁵ While sibling language is used metaphorically in philosophical groups, mystery cults, and occasionally in religious associations (Aasgaard, *Brothers*, 108–11, also *NIDNTT*, 1:255), it is rarely central in the way that it is in the early church (Aasgaard, *Brothers*, 116). Also φιλαδελφία is not used in the same way (*TDNT*, 1:146).

¹⁶⁶⁶ See §6.2.1.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family. Exploring a Pauline Metaphor*, Nottingham: Apollos, 2006, 47; S. M. Baugh, 'Marriage and Family in Ancient Greek Society,' 103–131; Susan Treggiari, 'Marriage and Family in Roman Society,' 132–82; David W. Chapman, 'Marriage and Family in Second Temple Judaism,' 183–239, all in Ken M. Campbell, ed. *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Treggiari, 'Marriage,' 141.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Burke, *Adopted*, 47; Baugh, 'Marriage,' 103; Treggiari, 'Marriage,' 133–34; Chapman, 'Marriage,' 183.

¹⁶⁷⁰ Treggiari also notes that Musonius Rufus also sees sharing as part of married life (Treggiari, 'Marriage,' 147).

a *manus* marriage, that is the wife remained part of her birth family, gifts between husband and wife were discouraged.¹⁶⁷¹

However Paul's language in Thessalonians points to sibling relationships rather than marriage relationships and therefore while the expectations of participation and partnership in work and roles in the marriage are a helpful background, our focus for this comparator will be sibling relationships. These are less formally defined.¹⁶⁷² Aasgaard points out that in the Twelve Tables (Table 5) brothers were 'financially and legally responsible for each other's family', however it is unclear how important the Twelve Tables were in the imperial era.¹⁶⁷³ Aasgaard points to Plutarch's *On Brotherly Love* as a possible source of information about sibling relationships during the first century. While Plutarch writes from an aristocratic male background, Aasgaard argues he is generally seen as reflecting wider sibling relationships.¹⁶⁷⁴

Plutarch stresses the importance of sibling relationships (*Mor.* 478BC) and of love between siblings (*Mor.* 480A-C). He notes the importance of siblings supporting one another through 'mutual preservation and assistance' (*Mor.* 478DE). Siblings should not compete with one another (*Mor.* 484A, 485F-486B). Rather they should strive for equality (*Mor.* 484B-D). They should bear with one another's faults (*Mor.* 482A) and forgive one another (*Mor.* 489CD). Older brothers should care for younger brothers (*Mor.* 486F-487B). If a brother incurs the anger of the father, the brother should seek to restore him to favour (*Mor.* 482EF). Brothers are to serve each other (*Mor.* 486BC) and have a responsibility to help the sons of brothers (*Mor.* 492A-D). While brothers are to love and share, Plutarch does not provide that much information on the practical responsibilities, and speaks of brothers sharing 'with each other their studies and recreations and games' (*Mor.* 480BC).

This has been a very brief overview of some aspects of family life; however it is possible to suggest a number of possible similarities and differences. First, there is a similarity in affection and Paul uses kinship language. Secondly, there is evidence of mutual commitment and expectation of participation / work. Thirdly, there is evidence of sharing and helping being expected in family life and the possibility of

¹⁶⁷¹ Treggiari, 'Marriage,' 163.

¹⁶⁷² Aasgaard, *Brothers*, 63.

¹⁶⁷³ Aasgaard, *Brothers*, 67.

¹⁶⁷⁴ Aasgaard, *Brothers*, 93.

food being used as a sanction was noted earlier.¹⁶⁷⁵ Fourthly, the evidence around property suggests some mix of individual and communal responsibility / ownership within families which may correlate to the individual and communal responsibility seen in the Thessalonian example as well as the individual and communal approach to possessions seen in the two Acts examples.¹⁶⁷⁶ Fifthly, Plutarch's injunction for brothers to bear with and forgive one another shows similarities to the depth of relationship Paul expects in Thessalonians and elsewhere. Sixthly, Plutarch's concern for equality may bear some similarity to Paul's concern for all to play a part.

There do appear to be differences. The evidence we have found for families does not include an expectation or call to be benefactors, or to sharing further afield, although there is some evidence of sharing further afield within families. In addition while love and sharing are advocated between siblings, there is little on the practical outworking of this.

There are significant limitations in attempting to do a comparison to family life and expectations, including the fact that much of the economic evidence is from marriage documents, while Paul more frequently uses ἀδελφοί, where we have more limited economic evidence. Therefore these similarities and particularly differences are tentative. However Paul's language and some of the evidence gathered do suggest some points of similarity.

6.7.3. *Macedonian Associations*

There are a number of reasons to consider associations as a possible comparator for the Thessalonian church. There is lots of evidence of a variety of associations in Macedonia despite the restrictions brought in by the Roman authorities.¹⁶⁷⁷ While Acts 17 points to Paul preaching in the synagogue, 1 Thess 1.9 would imply that the majority of the Thessalonian church were Gentiles. In addition there is limited evidence of Jews in Macedonia.¹⁶⁷⁸ Ascough argues that the references to κόπος (2.9; 3.5 and the verbal form in 5.12) together with the references to manual labour (2.7-9; 4.1, 11) would make sense in the setting of a community of manual workers or trades people, which would fit with the expectation of individuals working.¹⁶⁷⁹ He also argues that Paul's use of these words and phrases would dishonour any who

¹⁶⁷⁵ See §6.4.2.

¹⁶⁷⁶ See §3.2.2, §3.3.4.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Ascough, *Associations*, 17, 42.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Ascough, 'Community,' 311-13.

¹⁶⁷⁹ Ascough, 'Community,' 318.

were not manual workers,¹⁶⁸⁰ but Paul could be using the words to re-orientate the Thessalonians' approach to work. Ascough suggests that associations are a plausible context for 1 Thess 5.14.¹⁶⁸¹

There were various kinds of associations with different characteristics.¹⁶⁸² They were generally religious or based round particular trades.¹⁶⁸³ Associations provided an opportunity for social belonging and those who were part of associations were normally lower rank,¹⁶⁸⁴ although associations could include patrons.¹⁶⁸⁵ Therefore Ascough argues that the associations in Macedonia were either lower rank or mixed.¹⁶⁸⁶

Membership of an association could be used to gain honour, if one were a founder or patron.¹⁶⁸⁷ Also associations provided for burial and funerary rites.¹⁶⁸⁸ While there was a hierarchy between members and founders / officials, there was equality between members.¹⁶⁸⁹ Harland notes that there is some evidence of the use of ἀδελφοί in association epitaphs, for example IKilikiaBM II 201 which speaks of the co-owners of a tomb (Cilicia, first century CE),¹⁶⁹⁰ or a third century CE inscription on a tomb in Thessalonica (*IG X.2.1* 824).¹⁶⁹¹ However the context of this second example indicates that the term is not used in a way that expresses love or affection between the brothers. Harland acknowledges that associations do not necessarily use ἀδελφοί with the same meaning as the Christian community, but that it does indicate a sense of belonging.¹⁶⁹²

Belonging to an association involved paying regular dues¹⁶⁹³ and there were fines for disorderly behaviour (*IG II*² 1368; *P. Lond.* VII 2193).¹⁶⁹⁴ Some could provide assistance if a person was wronged (*IG II*² 1275).

¹⁶⁸⁰ Ascough, 'Community,' 315.

¹⁶⁸¹ Ascough, *Associations*, 177–78.

¹⁶⁸² Ascough, *Associations*, 14.

¹⁶⁸³ Ascough, 'Community,' 316.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Ascough, *Associations*, 47.

¹⁶⁸⁵ Ascough, *Associations*, 51.

¹⁶⁸⁶ Ascough, *Associations*, 53.

¹⁶⁸⁷ Ascough, *Associations*, 28–29, 79.

¹⁶⁸⁸ Ascough, *Associations*, 24–25.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Ascough, *Associations*, 59.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Harland, *Dynamics*, 68–69.

¹⁶⁹¹ Harland, *Dynamics*, 71.

¹⁶⁹² Harland, *Dynamics*, 80.

¹⁶⁹³ Ascough, *Associations*, 63–64.

¹⁶⁹⁴ *P. Lond.* VII 2193 accessed at <http://www.philipharland.com/greco-roman-associations/?p=2922> 28/08/14.

There is also some limited translocal evidence. *CIG* 5853 has already been mentioned where the Tyrian senate agreed that the Roman association of Tyrian merchants should pay rent for the Puteolian group.¹⁶⁹⁵ For some religious associations, there was provision for the priests to be brought from the country of origin, for example Egypt.¹⁶⁹⁶ However as Oakes points out, Ascough's work does not examine the extent to which such links are present in VAs in comparison with churches.¹⁶⁹⁷

There are a number of similarities between associations and the Thessalonian community. Both ate together. Both included manual workers. There is some overlap of language, for example Paul's use of φιλοτιμέομαι¹⁶⁹⁸ and the use of ἀδελφοί.

However there are also differences. First there is no evidence that associations were eating together as frequently¹⁶⁹⁹ as is suggested by Paul's injunction about preventing people from eating. Secondly associations are also not shown as focusing on love and sharing, that is they have a different community ethos.¹⁷⁰⁰ Thirdly there are also some differences in how the groups correct and deal with idleness and disruptive behaviour. Paul encourages the Thessalonians to admonish the ἀτάκτοι and reminds them that those who are unwilling to work should not eat. In contrast the associations usually imposed fines. Fourthly there is not the same evidence of an external focus for associations, while Paul is clear that he wants the Thessalonians to do good outside their group.

6.7.4. Patronage

Patronage has already been described and discussed in §4.2.2 and §5.7.4, including its ubiquity in the ancient world. In this chapter evidence has been provided of some of the probable issues connected to patronage in Thessalonica.

The similarities with patronage are mainly around the ἀτάκτοι rather than the example that Paul presents or that which is evidenced in the actions of the wider Thessalonian congregation. The ἀτάκτοι issue seems to have a patronage background with some Thessalonians having an expectation of being able to be dependent on others in return for concerning themselves with the patron's affairs.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Ascough, *Associations*, 95.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Ascough, *Associations*, 95–96.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Oakes, 'Review,' 377.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Ascough, 'Community,' 321.

¹⁶⁹⁹ Schnabel, 'Review,' 336.

¹⁷⁰⁰ Ascough, 'Community,' 322.

More widely it is possible that Greek ideas of what work was appropriate to free men may have also influenced the ἀτάκτοι. The other similarity is Paul's use of τὸ ἀγαθὸν διώκετε εἰς ἀλλήλους καὶ εἰς πάντας (1 Thess 5.14) and μὴ ἐγκακήσητε καλοποιοῦντες (2 Thess 3.13) where Paul uses phrases that would often be used of benefaction.¹⁷⁰¹

However there are a number of differences. First, the focus on love and sharing in the example of Thessalonian community contrasts with the absence of love and sharing language in patronage writing. Secondly, the focus on work and not being a burden – having a sufficiency – is different from patronage, where there was an expectation of being able to receive food and / or money from a patron. Thirdly, who the benefactors are is different. While Paul uses benefaction language, he urges all the Thessalonians to acts of benefaction rather than simply those who are better off. Thus fourthly the example of the Thessalonians does not provide the same kind of stratification that was part and parcel of patronage relationships. This can be seen in the way the key relationships are within the community and then to outsiders in blessing rather than hierarchical triangles.

6.8. Conclusion

The Thessalonian community is one which showed familial love and provision and deep sharing relationships. However there were some – the ἀτάκτοι – who were dependent and disruptive, probably for a mix of reasons. Paul commends the Thessalonians for their love. He uses love as the rationale and motivation for working, so that they do not exploit one another and are not burdens. Paul's expectation that those who are able to work should work (and thus the boundaries he puts in place) suggests an egalitarian approach to community. The Thessalonians not only shared with one another, but also showed love to believers elsewhere. Paul reminds them that their work and relationships are key for their relationships with those outside. Paul does not just want them to not be dependent, he wants them to be doing good to those outside. There is both an individual responsibility to work and a collective responsibility to do good.

The comparators provide possible backgrounds to some of the actions of the ἀτάκτοι and to some of Paul's language. There are also some similarities between the comparators, particularly family life, and Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians,

¹⁷⁰¹ See §6.5.3.

but there are also clear distinctives, particularly in comparison with the Epicureans, Voluntary Associations (VAs) and patronage.

First, there is a focus on love and sharing in the Thessalonian community, which is not seen in the same way in the Epicureans, VAs and patronage. For example, Paul addresses the Thessalonians as brothers, the Epicureans saw one another as friends.

Secondly, there is a greater focus on doing good to those outside the community, which is not seen in the VA, family and Epicurean comparators. While this element is present in patronage, Paul reorientates their patronage expectations and calls all to benefaction rather than simply a few.

Thirdly, the focus on love and sharing, the call to all to benefaction, and the exhortation to work suggest that Paul wanted to encourage a community without the social stratification that was seen in patronage relationships.

Fourthly, the Thessalonian example of sharing involves more frequent eating together than is seen in the Epicurean, patronage or VA comparators.

7. Sharing Possession in Community in the NT: Christian Distinctives

This thesis has examined the sharing of possessions in community in the NT with particular reference to Jesus and his disciples, the earliest Christians and Paul. This chapter summarises the rationale for the approach of this thesis in examining NT examples of sharing of possessions. It then draws out the common characteristics in the NT examples of sharing possessions in community. Having reviewed the comparisons with the surrounding culture, and similarities to and differences from the cultural context that individual NT examples show, it then compares across the comparisons. This identifies the ways in which the NT examples examined show similarities to their cultural context as well as ways they are consistently different to their contemporary surroundings. It then highlights the common motivations for sharing evidenced in the NT texts before concluding and suggesting future research possibilities.

7.1. Summary

The literature review (§1.1) provided a brief overview of the material that addresses questions around possessions in the NT, highlighting studies which cover contemporary questions, ethical approaches, historical or topical studies which include the NT, possessions in the NT, and sharing possessions in the NT. It noted that questions around possessions are key in contemporary Christian thought and in the NT texts. It observed that despite Panikulum's focus on communal identity and Saxby's historical study of community of goods, most studies focus on individual Christian practice or on policy at a state / economic level. Even Johnson, who specifically focuses on sharing possessions, concentrates on the individual believer's relationship with God. The literature review also noted scholars' recognition of the way the NT provides a diversity of models of sharing possessions with different situations. For example, Johnson focuses on two main texts and privileges almsgiving over community of goods as an example to follow. This thesis has covered a range of texts with different genres and authors and has aimed to hold the diversity within the texts in tension rather than privileging one model over another.

We have considered the common purse in John's gospel (§2), an example which shows sharing in the small group of Jesus and itinerant disciples with support

from non-itinerant disciples. The γλωσσόκομον was one form of sharing which was used to buy food, give to the poor and for wider needs.

We then looked at the early chapters of Acts (2, 4, 5, 6) and the example of selling, sharing and holding in common in the context of the earliest days of the church (§3.2). Here the sharing is linked to God's grace and the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is voluntary, yet with assumptions about how the giving takes place. While private property in name continues, possessions are seen as common and are sold and used as needs arise within the community.

Later in Acts we considered the example of the church in Antioch sharing with believers in Judaea with whom they had an ongoing relationship (11.19–30) (§3.3). It is an example where individuals contribute according to their ability, but where there is also corporate responsibility for sharing. Sharing is presented as key to being disciples of Jesus. The example evidences practical and careful stewardship.

In 1 Cor 11 we considered the example of sharing of food at the Lord's Supper in Corinth (chapter 4), where Paul instructs the Corinthians that their sharing of food should show equality and care for one another as members of one united body made up of people from diverse backgrounds, for whom Christ died.

In 2 Cor 8 and 9 we considered another example of sharing at a distance, but one with a less established relationship between those giving and those receiving (chapter 5). It is an example where sharing / giving: is core to being a Christian; is rooted in grace, in Jesus and his example; provides for need; is voluntary, generous and practical; involves all; is in relation to what one has; is relational; and has potential reciprocity. It is also an example where probity is important and God is central as the ultimate benefactor.

In 1 and 2 Thessalonians we considered the presence of limits or boundaries to sharing in the context of regular shared meals in a community which showed familial love and provision, and deep sharing relationships (chapter 6). Paul instructs the Thessalonians to work as part of the way they love each other and he exhorts them to do good not only to those within the group, but also to those outside.

The studies in the literature review (§1.1) also showed the importance of cultural, social and economic contexts to approaches to possessions and therefore this thesis examined the background to each of the NT examples it looked at, as well as considering what kind of example was shown, the motivation for sharing

and how this was influenced by beliefs about God and identity including communal identity.

7.2. Common Characteristics of the NT Examples

The specifics of each NT situation and example are such that we would not necessarily expect to find identical approaches to sharing possessions in each of the examples, as different situations create different needs and therefore different responses. For example, we would not expect the same approaches to sharing for a group of itinerant disciples in Galilee and Judaea as for a settled community in Corinth. However when we look across the six NT examples of sharing that we have examined there are commonalities. Some exist across several examples, some across just a couple of examples.

The following characteristics exist across four or more examples and are not contradicted by the characteristics of the examples in which they do not appear. All of the examples exhibit more than one of the common characteristics. None of the examples exhibits all of them.

First, the examples are *practical and responsive* (John, Acts 2–6, Acts 11, 2 Cor 8–9, Thessalonians). This indicates that sharing was not simply an ideal but something that was part of the practical life of the communities. In John the *γλωσσόκομον* provides for the practical needs of the disciples and others. In the early chapters of Acts, selling happens in response to need, and when issues arise in the distribution of food, steps are taken to address them. In Acts 11 the giving is in response to a prophecy and care is taken over the transportation and delivery of the gift. In 2 Cor 8 and 9 Paul shows care for the practical details of the delivery of the collection and in 1 Cor 16.2 gives guidance for how to collect the gift. The practical nature of the examples is also seen in the responsiveness to changing circumstances (for example the move in Acts 4 to proceeds being brought to the apostles' feet) and in the responses to conflicting ideas of what is appropriate sharing. This is probably partly as a result of the communities being relatively new and therefore in a formational stage, where the practicalities of expectations are still being established. For example, Paul puts a boundary in place in 2 Thess 3.10 which limits those who share food.

Secondly, the examples are *based in a sense of communal identity, unity or relationships between individuals or communities* (John, Acts 2–6, 1 Cor 11, 2 Cor 8–9, Thessalonians). In John, the disciples travel together and Jesus teaches about their relationship with one another, with him and the Father. In Acts 2–6 the

community is one in heart and mind. In 1 Corinthians Paul emphasises that the Corinthians are brought into communion with God and one another through Jesus' death, and are one body. Therefore they should not be divided, and their actions should be in character with the reality of the covenant meal they are eating. In 2 Cor 8 and 9 Paul focuses on the way the giving of the Macedonians is part of their giving to the Lord and Paul. Paul reminds the Corinthians that giving will lead to prayer, thanksgiving and to the Jerusalem believers longing for the Corinthians. In Thessalonians Paul uses sibling language and speaks of the deep sharing between the Thessalonians and between him and the Thessalonians.

Thirdly, the groups sharing often show *a mix of backgrounds, either of different cultural backgrounds and / or of different social classes* (John, Acts 11, 1 Cor 11, 2 Cor 8-9). In the γλωσσόκομον example there are disciples who leave their jobs and homes and the women who have resources not only to support themselves but also to contribute to the γλωσσόκομον. In Acts 11 the community includes those who are not from Jewish backgrounds. In 1 Corinthians there is evidence of a mix of social backgrounds and of the presence of both Gentile and Jewish background believers. In 2 Corinthians Paul exhorts the Corinthian community, who include people from a range of religious and social backgrounds to give to a community, which is probably a predominantly Jewish Christian community.

Fourthly, the examples often *do not have only one way of an individual contributing to the sharing, but multiple ways* (John, Acts 2-6, Acts 11, 2 Cor 8-9). For example, some disciples leave behind possessions and follow Jesus; some travel with and contribute to the common purse; and others do not travel with, but provide hospitality to the travelling group. In Acts 2-6 it seems unlikely that each member was in a position to sell land or property to contribute to the common fund, but those who were able to do so did when the need arose and the community held what they had in common. In Acts 11 each person gave according to their ability, i.e. they did not all give the same amount. In 2 Cor 8 and 9 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to give according to what they have and to alleviate need rather than to put themselves in need, while the Macedonians have given beyond their means. Frequently these different ways of contributing go alongside the importance of the individual making a choice to contribute with a tension between the voluntary nature of contributing and the existence of assumptions about

contributing. This can be seen in the way Ananias and Sapphira are free to decide and yet there are assumptions about how contributions take place.

Fifthly, while it is often individuals that make the decision to contribute, there is a *tension between the individual and the community in terms of responsibility or ownership of sharing* (John, Acts 2-6, Acts 11, Thessalonians). In John individuals give to the γλωσσόκομον, and Judas holds it for the group. Yet it is used for the needs of the group and for the poor. In Acts 2-6 individuals decide to sell and give, but all see what they have as common. In Acts 11.27-30 each of the believers contributes according to what they have and yet they decide. In Thessalonians food is shared together and there are close relationships, yet each person has a responsibility to work. Individually and collectively they are called to do good.

Sixthly, the examples nearly all *involve responding to need* (except Thessalonians) as opposed to gaining honour or security. In John the γλωσσόκομον seems to be used to give to the poor. In Acts 2-6 the community responds to need by individuals selling property and possessions for the common fund, and also by dealing with the issue of the widows left out in the distribution of food. In Acts 11 the Antiochene church responds to the need created by the famine / food shortages. In 1 Corinthians Paul is clear that the actions of the Corinthians should be such that there are none who are remaining hungry or without when they eat together. In 2 Cor 8 and 9 the collection is to alleviate need in the Jerusalem community.

Seventhly, four of the examples include *eating together* (John, Acts 2-6, 1 Cor 11, Thessalonians). Jesus and the disciples eat together and the disciples are also shown going to buy food for the group. In Acts 2-6 the believers eat together in the temple courts and homes. In 1 Cor 11 and Thessalonians the church communities eat together.

7.3. Comparisons with the Surrounding Culture

Each example was also compared with similar situations or examples in the Jewish and / or Graeco-Roman worlds to discover the ways in which the early church behaved in ways similar to and different from the surrounding culture.

The example of the γλωσσόκομον in John was compared with the practice of the Rabbis and their disciples, the Qumran / Essene communities, and the Cynics. The sharing in the early chapter of Acts was compared with Jewish relief for the poor, the Qumran / Essene communities, and the Pythagorean community. The gift from the church in Antioch to believers in Judaea was compared with the

practice of appointing a *curator annonae*, and the gifts of Helena and Izates during a time of need in Jerusalem. The sharing of food in 1 Corinthians was compared to Graeco-Roman meal practices. The gift to the believers in Jerusalem was compared to: the practice of appointing a *curator annonae*; the example of Helena and Izates; the practice of gathering Temple Tax in the Diaspora; and expectations in patronage, benefaction and gift exchange. The sharing in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and issues around the ἀτάκτοι were compared to the Epicureans, expectations in family life, associations, and patronage practice.

7.4. Similarities to the Cultural Context

Detailed examinations of the similarities and differences are found in each chapter.¹⁷⁰² We now turn to consider whether there are common similarities or differences across our comparisons.

With seventeen different comparisons it is less easy to identify areas where there are similarities across all the comparisons (although we should not expect to find the same similarities due to the diversity of both the examples and the comparators). However the presence of seventeen, and arguably more, possible comparators, shows something of the variety of examples of ways of sharing possessions / food and reminds us of the key role that sharing food and possessions played in society.

Response to need, one of the characteristics that was found across five of the six examples that we examined, is also present in the Jewish comparators and in the example of the *curator annonae*. However it should be noted that in the *curator annonae* example, there is not necessarily a concern for those most in need and there is a deeper concern to avoid civil disruption, a rather different kind of need.

There are a number of comparators where there are similarities to the example being presented within the NT text, or to the example being argued against in the NT text, and where there may be possible influences. For example the Epicureans and the ἀτάκτοι in the Thessalonica show similarities in avoidance of manual work and it is possible that some of the behaviour of the ἀτάκτοι may have been influenced by knowledge of Epicurean practice or expectations of philosophical teaching and practice. In contrast, while the example of the temple tax has been mooted as a possible comparator to the gift to Jerusalem, we saw that this was less likely to have influenced the conception or practice of the gift to Jerusalem. We

¹⁷⁰² See §2.2.1.2, §2.2.1.3, §2.2.2.3, §2.2.2.4, §2.2.3.3, §2.2.3.4, §3.2.3.1, §3.2.3.2, §3.2.3.3, §3.3.3, §4.8, §5.7, §6.7.

also noted possible connections between the practice of Jesus and his disciples and the early church in Acts with the Essene / Qumran communities. In addition specific similarities in practice can be seen. In both John and the Essenes / Qumran there is holding in common of possessions, a treasurer, eating together and provision for those in need. In Acts 2-6 and in Jewish almsgiving there is concern for those in need. In Acts 2-6 and the Essenes / Qumran there is handing over of property and provision for the group. In 1 Cor 11 association meals also show concern for good order and the formation of the community. In Thessalonians Voluntary Associations also eat together and included manual workers. However there were also differences.

7.5. Differences from the Cultural Context

When we turn to look at differences, there are some striking individual differences for specific examples.

For example, the way Jesus and his disciples eat with others outside the group is different to the firm boundaries of the Essene / Qumran communities. In the early chapters of Acts individuals remain in possession of their property even when it is held in common, until the point at which it is sold to provide for need, while in the Essene / Qumran communities property is handed over and held centrally.

In Acts 11 the participation of each person in the gift to the believers in Judaea is very different from the practice of *curator annonae* or of Helena and Izates, where a wealthy individual or a few wealthy people provide.

In 1 Cor 11, Paul's desire for those of different social backgrounds to eat together as equals contrasts with general Graeco-Roman meal practice, where social differentiation is a key part of how people ate together.

In 2 Cor 8 and 9 Paul's presentation of God as supreme benefactor and introduction of a three way relationship between giver, receiver and God changes the strong expectation of reciprocity in the relationship between giver and receiver in patronage and benefaction.

In 1 and 2 Thessalonians the focus on manual work is different from the Epicureans, who avoided it. The call to benefaction is different from the Epicureans, the associations, and family life, where there is not the same call to do good outside the group. The call to all to benefaction is different from the expectations of who a benefactor is in patronage practice.

7.6. Consistent Distinctives

When we look across the examples and comparators, we find a number of characteristic differences that are seen in four or more examples compared to their contemporary surroundings.

First, we see *patronage expectations subverted* in some way in all the examples apart from the one in John's gospel. In Acts 4 what is sold is brought to the feet of the disciples, thus preventing individuals acting as patrons. In Acts 11 it is not just the relatively affluent who give. In 1 Cor 11, Paul expects a socially diverse group to eat together as equals rather than to have different amounts of food and different quality food to eat. In 2 Cor 8 and 9 God is the ultimate benefactor and receiver of thanks. In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Paul urges all Thessalonians to be involved in benefaction as opposed to expecting some of them to be clients.

Secondly, there is evidence of *greater diversity* in the early Christian groups compared to the comparator groups. With the γλωσσόκομον there are men and women in the group. Some have left whatever they have behind. Others seem more affluent and have retained their possessions and use them to contribute to the common purse. In Acts 11 the Antiochene church includes Jewish and Gentile believers. In 1 and 2 Corinthians the church includes those from different social backgrounds (Roman, Greek and Jewish; slave and free; richer and poorer).

Thirdly, the NT examples present *a more flexible, fluid or less structured example of sharing* than the surrounding practices. This may be in part due to the fact that the early church examples are of communities at an early stage of formation. In John this can be seen in the different ways of contributing and participating as disciples of Jesus, including: leaving and following, contributing to the γλωσσόκομον, and hosting Jesus and his disciples. In Acts 2-6 individuals sell in response to need as opposed to at a particular point of entry into the community. Thus there are those within the community who have given in this way, others who have yet to give in this way and still others who may not have the ability to give in this way. In Acts 11 each person gives according to their ability rather than a set amount. In 2 Cor 8 and 9 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to give according to what they have, so that they are not in need, yet praises the Macedonians for giving beyond their means.

Fourthly, there is *an emphasis on the free choice of individuals to contribute or participate in sharing* in the examples in John, Acts 2-6, Acts 11 and 2 Cor 8-9, compared to the more defined expectations in some of the comparators. With the

γλωσσόκομον this is seen in the choice of the women to contribute. In Acts 2-6 it is seen in Peter's question to Ananias and Sapphira where he is clear that the property and money was theirs to dispose of. In Acts 11 each person makes a choice to give according to what they have. In 2 Cor 8 and 9 Paul emphasises the voluntary nature of the giving. However there is also the clear expectation in 1 and 2 Thessalonians that refusal to work and thus participate in contributing to the community, precludes an individual from participating in sharing food in the community.

Fifthly, in a number of NT examples there is an emphasis on *each person being involved in the sharing and on participation in the sharing being a key part of the life of faith*. In Acts 11 sharing possessions is presented as being part of what it means to follow / be discipled to Jesus. In 1 Cor 11 each person is to be included and the way they eat together is to reflect their relationships with one another because of Jesus. In 2 Cor 8 and 9 Paul points to the example of Jesus' giving. In Thessalonians, Paul's exhortation to work underlines the importance of each person contributing and participating.

Sixthly, in those NT examples where there is evidence of eating together, there is sometimes evidence *of a greater focus on eating together and on the eating together being more frequent*. It is likely that the disciples who travelled with Jesus ate together frequently. In Acts 2-6 the community is shown eating regular meals together in 2.46 and then responding to issues around eating together in Acts 6. In Corinth and Thessalonica the communities are eating together more frequently than Voluntary Associations or clubs would have.

Seventhly, there is also evidence of *stronger relational bonds between the early believers or a greater focus on relational bonds* compared to the comparator examples. This could in part be a result of the greater fluidity of the NT examples, which may necessitate stronger relational bonds in the absence of the more defined rules of some of the comparator examples, for example the Essenes / Qumran community. In John, Jesus' call to come and see and then his teaching on the relationship of the disciples with him and the Father point to the importance of relationships rather than the entry rules of Qumran. In Acts 2-6 the believers are of one heart and mind. In Acts 11 and 2 Cor 8 and 9 the giving shows relationship and commitment over a distance, even when some of those giving have not met those to whom they are giving. This focus on strong relationships can be seen in the use of sibling language in the letters to the Thessalonians.

7.7. Motivation

The NT examples also exhibit some common motivations for sharing. These include God's grace, action and provision (Acts 2-6, 2 Cor 8-9, Thessalonians);¹⁷⁰³ the relationship and unity between believers (Acts 2-6, Acts 11, 1 Cor 11, 2 Cor 8-9, Thessalonians);¹⁷⁰⁴ and the example and actions of Jesus, particularly his death (Acts 2-6, 1 Cor 11, 2 Cor 8-9).¹⁷⁰⁵ It is more difficult to compare these characteristics with the surrounding culture, as not all the comparator examples include specific motivation for the sharing which takes place. However, as we have already noted above, the NT examples do consistently show stronger relational bonds or a greater focus on relationships than the comparator examples. In addition, apart from some possible evidence in the Jewish comparators (e.g. Jewish almsgiving), we have not found evidence of God's provision and grace as motivation for sharing.

While there is some evidence of individuals being models for action (for example older siblings in the family life comparator), the example of Jesus and his death operates in a somewhat different way. It is not Jesus' death that the believers are to imitate directly, but rather the character of self-giving evidenced in it. Also believers are to live in the reality of the new relationships with God and one another that Jesus' death has established.

Therefore, we tentatively offer these three motivations for sharing as Christian distinctives: God's grace, action and provision; the relationship and unity between believers; and the example and actions of Jesus, particularly his death.

7.8. Conclusion

This study has examined six examples of sharing in NT texts and highlighted similarities across the examples. The NT examples show sharing which: is practical and responsive; is based in a sense of communal identity, unity or relationships between individuals or communities; is in groups with a mix of backgrounds, either of different cultural backgrounds and / or of different social classes; does not have

¹⁷⁰³ The role of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.1-4; 4.31; §3.2.1); God's grace (Acts 4.33; 2 Cor 8.1-6; §3.2.1.2; §5.3.5), God's provision (2 Cor 9.8; §5.3.4), God as Father (1 Thess 1.3; 3.11, 13; 2 Thess 2.16); God has loved and chosen believers (1 Thess 1.4; 4.9; 2 Thess 2.13, 16-17).

¹⁷⁰⁴ Unity (Acts 2.44; 4.32; 1 Cor 11.18; §3.2.1), relationship between the churches (Acts 11: 22, 25, 27; §3.3.1.1), body of Christ (1 Cor 12.12-31; §4.4.4.3), fellowship with God and other believers (2 Cor 9.12-15; §5.3.4), brothers / sisters (1 Cor 11.33; 2 Cor 8.1; 1 Thess 4.1, 13; 2 Thess 3.6, 13; §6.6).

¹⁷⁰⁵ Response to the gospel (Acts 2.14-47; §3.2.1.1), Jesus' death (1 Cor 11.23-29; 2 Cor 8.9; §4.4.4.2; §5.3.2).

only one way of an individual contributing to the sharing, but multiple ways; has a tension between the individual and the community in terms of responsibility or ownership of the sharing; involves responding to need; and includes eating together. It has also compared each example to the contemporary sharing practices and examined similarities and differences. It has then identified the similarities and differences across these comparisons and analysed areas where the early church shows similarities to surrounding communities and / or may have been influenced by other communities, and also where there seems to be a pattern of particular distinctive characteristics in how the early church approached sharing possessions compared to the surrounding culture. In comparison with the surrounding cultures, the NT examples show groups with greater social diversity; sharing where everyone is involved in contributing; sharing which is voluntary and yet with expectations; more flexible approaches to sharing; and sharing which is based on relationship with God and other believers. The NT examples also often undermine patronage expectations and present sharing as a key part of the life of faith.

7.9. Future Research Possibilities

There are a number of possible future research opportunities that are highlighted by this thesis. First, the method of comparison with comparators could be used in other areas where the NT presents a diversity of examples of practice: for example women in leadership. Secondly, the example of sharing in 1 and 2 Thessalonians was compared with family life and we noted the limitations of doing this, given the range of possible family life practices to use for comparison and the limited evidence about the expected financial / sharing relationships between siblings. A possible area of further research would be to examine the evidence of such relationships in greater detail to provide a more suitable body of evidence for comparison. Thirdly, across the examples we noted the ways that patronage is subverted and another area for possible research would be to compare a range of examples to patronage and benefaction practice alone.

Appendix 1

The Link between the Community at Khirbet Qumran and the Essenes

While there is a general consensus that the Qumran community were Essenes, there are dissenting voices. This appendix explores the arguments for and against this identification in greater depth and concludes by concurring with the consensus view.¹⁷⁰⁶

The first argument for a link between the community at Khirbet Qumran and the Essenes is Pliny's description of the Essenes,¹⁷⁰⁷ which places the Essenes on the west bank of the Dead Sea with Engedi below them. We will consider questions over Pliny's description below when we look at arguments against identifying the Essenes with Qumran.

The second argument for a link between the community at Khirbet Qumran and the Essenes is the similarities between the descriptions of the Essenes and the accounts of the community at Khirbet Qumran found within the Dead Sea Scrolls. Beall notes 26 parallels and 21 probable parallels, with only 10 statements without a parallel and 6 discrepancies.¹⁷⁰⁸ Vanderkam similarly considers the parallels Beall identifies and concludes that while there are some differences, for example the length of the initiation period, 'in the end, the extent of agreement is astonishing.'¹⁷⁰⁹ Not only are there significant parallels in the practice described but also, Collins notes, while passages about common property exist outside Judaism 'the only parallel to the Essene practice in a contemporary Jewish source is found in the *Community Rule*.'¹⁷¹⁰

The third argument concerns the parallels between the descriptions provided by Josephus and Philo and the archaeological remains found at Khirbet Qumran. We have already mentioned the presence of large numbers of cisterns at Khirbet Qumran and Josephus refers to the way the Essenes bathe in cold water (*J.W.* 2.129). Murphy notes the red colour in some of the bones found in the graveyard. The colouring seems to come from ingesting madder roots, which were thought to

¹⁷⁰⁶ Beall, *Josephus*, 124–29; Vanderkam, 'People,' 50. (Contra Baumgarten, 'Who,'.)

¹⁷⁰⁷ *Nat.* 5.15.73

¹⁷⁰⁸ Beall, *Josephus*, 124–9.

¹⁷⁰⁹ Vanderkam, 'People,' 56.

¹⁷¹⁰ John J. Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010, 143.

have healing properties.¹⁷¹¹ Josephus indicates the Essenes' interest in 'medicinal roots and the properties of stones.' (*J.W.* 2.136).

So there is the direct link that Pliny makes to a location on the west bank of the Dead Sea, the parallels between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the writings of Josephus and Philo and the wider archeological evidence at Khirbet Qumran. However questions have been raised about identifying the community at Qumran as Essenes.

First there are questions about the accuracy of the evidence provided by Pliny, with Mason going as far as to conclude that 'The Judean section of his *Natural History* is a farrago of outright errors and half-truths',¹⁷¹² from which is it not possible to identify Qumran. Pliny describes the location of the Essenes:

On the west side of the Dead Sea, but out of range of the noxious exhalations of the coast, is the solitary tribe (*gens sola*) of the Essenes... Lying below (*infra hos*) the Essenes was formerly the town of Engedi, second only to Jerusalem in the fertility of its land and in its groves of palm-trees, but now like Jerusalem a heap of ashes. Next comes Masada, a fortress on a rock, itself also not far from the Dead Sea (*Nat.* 5.15.73).

While Pliny is aware that Engedi and Masada had been destroyed at the point at which he is writing, he does not seem to be aware that Khirbet Qumran would also have been destroyed. However this may have been because he was using earlier sources and only had details of the fates of some of the towns.¹⁷¹³ Pliny also does not mention the existence of other Essene communities, but as Collins argues this could be because he is describing the Dead Sea region.¹⁷¹⁴

Baumgarten also raises the question of Pliny's use of *gens sola* and *infra hos*.¹⁷¹⁵ However *gens sola* need not refer to separate nation, but could have a wider meaning.¹⁷¹⁶ While *infra hos* means below, which might argue for the location Pliny is describing being in the hill above Engedi to the west, Pliny uses the term in an extended description of the area when he is moving from the northern to the southern end of the Dead Sea. This suggests that the location for the Essenes that he is describing is north of Engedi, which fits with the absence of archaeological remains in the hills above Engedi that could relate to the community described by

¹⁷¹¹ Murphy, *Wealth*, 342.

¹⁷¹² Steve Mason, 'What Josephus Say about the Essenes in his *Judean War*,' <http://orion.mscc.huji.ac.il/orion/programs/Mason00-2.html>, accessed 16th March 2011, n.p..

¹⁷¹³ Collins, *Qumran*, 142.

¹⁷¹⁴ Collins, *Qumran*, 127.

¹⁷¹⁵ Baumgarten, 'Who,' 178.

¹⁷¹⁶ Broshi, 'Essenes,' 28.

Pliny.¹⁷¹⁷ So while there are questions about some aspects of Pliny's description, most of them can be explained and there is not an obvious alternative to linking it to the site at Qumran.

Secondly, there are questions about discrepancies between the sectarian texts and the secondary sources for the Essenes. While Beall identifies 26 parallels, he also identifies 10 descriptions that do not have parallels in the DSS¹⁷¹⁸ and 6 discrepancies.¹⁷¹⁹ However, these discrepancies include situations where the secondary texts agree with either 1QS or CD, but disagree with the other sectarian texts. Thus some of the contradictions are in fact internal to the DSS, which include a range of rule traditions.¹⁷²⁰ This suggests that within the Qumran community there may have been diversity of practice and law. We would not necessarily expect Josephus and Philo, as outside observers,¹⁷²¹ to understand fully the nuances and variations in practice.

Similarly while Josephus and Philo also do not mention many aspects of the theological beliefs espoused in the DSS, for example the belief in the two Messiahs,¹⁷²² this may be due to lack of interest or knowledge; or a deliberate decision to omit details that did not further their writing aims.¹⁷²³

Baumgarten notes that in the DSS, there are no conclusive, only possible, suggestions for words that would produce the name 'Essene'.¹⁷²⁴ However, as Collins points out 'that the name "Essene" is not attested in the Hebrew scrolls is no objection to the Essene hypothesis' as the name was a Greek one, there 'for the convenience of Greek readers'.¹⁷²⁵

Thirdly, there are discrepancies between the texts and the archaeological evidence. The two main areas that such discrepancies exist are to do with the role and presence of women with the communities and toilet practices.

¹⁷¹⁷ Vanderkam, 'People,' 53.

¹⁷¹⁸ Beall, *Josephus*, 128.

¹⁷¹⁹ Beall, *Josephus*, 129.

¹⁷²⁰ Murphy, *Wealth*, 116.

¹⁷²¹ While Josephus claims to have studied with Bannus and experienced life as an Essene (*Life* 2.11-12), the timing of his description does not hold up and while he may have had some experience within an Essene community, it seems unlikely that he became a full member of the community and thus would have been more limited in his knowledge.

¹⁷²² Vanderkam, 'People,' 57.

¹⁷²³ Collins, *Qumran*, 155; Atkinson, 'Josephus,' 325 contra Mason, 'Josephus,' n.p..

¹⁷²⁴ Baumgarten, 'Who,' 175-6.

¹⁷²⁵ Collins, *Qumran*, 160.

Vanderdam and Flint point out that while Josephus allows for some Essenes to marry, both Philo and Pliny present the Essenes as a celibate male group.¹⁷²⁶ However, Mason believes that Josephus invented marrying Essenes to fit with the Roman expectation of marriage.¹⁷²⁷ The evidence of female skeletons at Qumran and references to women in the scrolls shown below suggest that this is an unnecessary hypothesis.

When we then turn to look at the textual and archaeological evidence at Qumran, we do discover the presence of some women. While there is disagreement about exactly how many skeletons in the cemetery are female and, of those which are female, how many date to the time of the community of the scrolls, even Zias allows for the existence of skeletons of women and children at Qumran and Ain el-Ghuweir, for example skeleton T9.¹⁷²⁸ While these may have been for visiting women, or women and children who were brought to Qumran after death, the question still remains of what connection they had with the community there. The presence of fewer women than men in graves at Qumran may have been because Qumran was a centre for students and only a few 'who lived there permanently had families'.¹⁷²⁹ Zias also notes a similar cemetery in Jerusalem with skeletons of men, women and children,¹⁷³⁰ which could relate to an Essene community.

When one looks at the DSS, the role and presence of women is not entirely clear. While 1QS does not mention women, CD does (CD 4.19-5.11, 7.6-7).¹⁷³¹ Bernstein notes that the presence of women in texts may not argue for their presence in the community as the texts may be reiterating or commenting on biblical texts about women,¹⁷³² or may be intended for another audience.¹⁷³³ However, Bernstein highlights the presence of laws which seem to be developed from biblical text by practical situations¹⁷³⁴ and the different punishments for complaints against fathers and mothers (4 Q270 7.1.13-15).¹⁷³⁵ Thus, within the

¹⁷²⁶ James and Peter Flint Vanderkam, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London: T&T Clark, 2002, 250.

¹⁷²⁷ Mason, 'Josephus,' n.p..

¹⁷²⁸ Zias, 'Cemeteries,' 250.

¹⁷²⁹ Schiffman, *Reclaiming*, 53.

¹⁷³⁰ Zias, 'Cemeteries,' 243.

¹⁷³¹ Moshe J. Bernstein, 'Women and Children in Legal and Liturgical Texts from Qumran,' *DSD* 11 (2004) 191-211, citing 191.

¹⁷³² Bernstein, 'Women,' 194.

¹⁷³³ Bernstein, 'Women,' 195.

¹⁷³⁴ Bernstein, 'Women,' 202.

¹⁷³⁵ Bernstein, 'Women,' 204.

evidence at Qumran both archaeological and textual, it appears that some women were present at least within the wider community whose way of life is described by the scrolls. Whether these women were present at Qumran, or part of the communities who lived beyond Qumran is not entirely clear, but it seems likely that few women lived at Qumran itself.

If Qumran were a centre of learning that members of the Essene community came to for some years in their youth, this fact might explain the generally healthy but young average age of death of the skeletons,¹⁷³⁶ as the normal practice would have been for most of the students to return to their own communities.

While there are discrepancies between the evidence at Qumran and that from Josephus and Philo, it is possible that a community, whose members married later and had strict rules which limited sexual relations more strictly than other forms of Judaism,¹⁷³⁷ could have led to both celibate and marrying groups.

The other area of archeological evidence that may not tally with that of Josephus is about toilets. Josephus reports that the Essenes made a hole in a ground with a hatchet (*J.W.* 2.148-9), while there is a latrine at Qumran.¹⁷³⁸ However both latrines and the hatchet burial version have important similarities: privacy during defecation and burying of faeces.¹⁷³⁹ Broshi also points out that one latrine would have been insufficient for the number of people at Qumran and was therefore probably for the less physically able, and suggests latrines may have been built in areas where digging holes each time would not be practical.¹⁷⁴⁰

While there are complexities in working out the exact relationship between the evidence about the Qumran community, and the evidence provided by Philo, Pliny and Josephus about the Essenes, these can often be explained. Sometimes the differences between them are also found within the Dead Sea Scrolls. There is also evidence of clear links between the Qumran community and the Essenes as described by Philo, Pliny and Josephus. These links include: similarities between the Dead Sea Scroll evidence and that of Pliny, Philo and Josephus; parallels between the archaeological evidence at Khirbet Qumran and the descriptions of the Essenes; and Pliny's placement of the Essenes in the vicinity of Khirbet Qumran. Therefore it is sensible to presume that the Qumran community and the Essenes

¹⁷³⁶ Murphy notes that the average age of death of the skeletons was 34 and that they were generally healthy skeletons. Murphy, *Wealth*, 339.

¹⁷³⁷ Bernstein, 'Women,' 198-201.

¹⁷³⁸ Baumgarten, 'Who,' 186.

¹⁷³⁹ Atkinson, 'Josephus,' 335.

¹⁷⁴⁰ Broshi, 'Essenes,' 32.

were part of one and the same group, albeit one that showed some diversity in its expression and practice. This appendix's examination of the arguments for and against a link between the Qumran community and the Essenes has confirmed the consensus opinion, which was briefly justified and used in the main thesis.

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